



# City of Oceanside

## Staff Report

**File #:** 26-1210

**Agenda Date:** 1/21/2026

**Agenda #:** 1.

**DATE:** DATE: January 21, 2026

**TO:** Chairperson and Members of the Community Development Commission

**FROM:** Development Services Department

**TITLE:** DOWNTOWN OCEANSIDE WORKSHOP

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Community Development Commission (CDC) receive a presentation on Downtown Oceanside and provide staff direction on the following proposed recommendations:

	Issue Area	Recommendation
1	Development Density	a) Direct staff to prepare a Downtown Specific Plan, including objective design standards b) Discuss the existing 5,500-unit cap and Coastal Commission's Pending Local Coastal Plan Amendment (LCPA) Suggested Modification
2	Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC)	Determine whether the Downtown Advisory Committee or Planning Commission is the more appropriate recommending body for Downtown development projects
3	Traffic	Direct staff to solicit consultant services for preparation of a Downtown-specific traffic analysis that explores the use of local streets and addresses potential traffic calming solutions to be employed on such streets in the near- and long-term
4	Parking	Authorize staff to solicit consultant services for conducting an updated Downtown Parking Action Plan (DPAP) to analyze the current state of parking in the Downtown and determine whether the 2018 DPAP remains relevant
5	Urban Design*	Direct staff to develop consistent design standards for parkways and sidewalk paving patterns in Downtown
6	Bird Strike Standards*	Direct staff to evaluate window design standards that address anti-bird strike concerns

7	Palm and Canopy Trees*	Direct staff that during design of Downtown development projects, all existing palm trees along Mission Avenue should remain in place. If a palm tree is removed along that corridor, it may only be replaced with a native palm or shade tree. If the City Council desires preparation of an updated Downtown Tree Plan, staff recommends that it be developed with the proposed Downtown Specific Plan.
8	Placemaking	a) Provide input on the proposed scope of work for the proposed Downtown Wayfinding/Placemaking Study b) Authorize implementation of a placemaking pilot project showcasing possible placemaking ideas (i.e., outdoor games, pop up parks, performance spaces, moveable seating areas, temporary art installation) by closing and activating Tremont Street between Mission Avenue and Pier View Way during Summer 2026

\*If directed to proceed, it's recommended that these items be incorporated into the scope of work for Issue Area No.1 (Downtown Specific Plan).

## **BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

At its October 1, 2025 meeting, the CDC directed staff to conduct a public workshop regarding Downtown Oceanside. This direction was provided following the CDC's consideration of the 325-unit mixed use project proposed on the Regal Cinema site (401 Mission Avenue). At minimum, the CDC requested that staff address the following Downtown-specific items from a more global perspective:

- Density
- Traffic and circulation
- Constituent concerns/requests

The following staff report discusses those items, as well as a number of other issue areas that have arisen through the CDC's consideration of recent project entitlements in the Downtown area.

Over the past 50 years, the City's Downtown area has undergone extensive redevelopment, consistent with a series of policies developed over time. Today, Downtown Oceanside is comprised of transit-oriented development, mixed-use residential, high-quality resort hotels, visitor serving commercial uses, the Cultural District, and a variety of public improvements that, collectively, create a vibrant community that serves and attracts local residents and tourists. Residential areas to the west of Coast Highway have seen single-family homes replaced by contemporary attached housing projects (both condominiums and rental apartments). Enabled by State Density Bonus Law and

other state housing legislation, midrise mixed-use projects with income-restricted units have, and continue to, materialize along Coast Highway alongside commercial uses and cultural amenities.

### *Policy and Reference Documents*

In 1975, the Oceanside Redevelopment Agency was formed to establish Oceanside as a business and visitor center for commerce, recreation, tourism, entertainment, arts and housing and to enhance the City's social and economic status for residents and visitors. The Redevelopment Plan for the Oceanside Downtown Redevelopment Project Area ("Redevelopment Plan") was adopted on November 12, 1975, and comprised of 375 acres located west of I-5, north to Harbor Drive and south to Wisconsin Avenue (Attachment 2 - Redevelopment Boundary Area Map). The Oceanside Redevelopment Agency was dissolved in 2012 as part of a statewide dissolution of all redevelopment agencies.

### General Plan, Local Coastal Program, and Zoning Ordinance

The General Plan establishes long-term policies to guide future development. It generally describes how land uses will be distributed throughout the City, including allowable density or intensity ranges for each land use. The current General Plan refers to the Redevelopment Plan as one of the tools the City uses to implement policies in the Land Use Element.

Passed in 1976, the California Coastal Act ("Coastal Act") requires that all coastal jurisdictions in the state adopt a Local Coastal Program (LCP) to ensure local implementation of Coastal Act priorities, which include protection of coastal resources, preservation/enhancement of public access to the shoreline, and provision of adequate recreational amenities, and visitor-serving commercial uses. The City adopted its current LCP in 1986; it has been substantially amended incrementally since then to reflect coastal policies and developments. The City's Land Use Plan and Implementation Plan guide development within Oceanside's Coastal Zone in accordance with the Coastal Act at the local level.

The boundaries for the Downtown portion of Oceanside's Coastal Zone are not composed of a single, fixed line. The Coastal Zone is defined pursuant to the Coastal Act; it generally extends from the Pacific Ocean inland to the east side of Coast Highway, and includes properties in proximity to the San Luis Rey River, Loma Alta Creek, and Buena Vista Lagoon. A map of the Coastal Zone within the Downtown area is provided as Attachment 3. The City has an adopted LCP certified by the California Coastal Commission ("Coastal Commission") that outlines goals, policies, and programs to ensure appropriate development and land uses within the coastal area. In 2016, the City embarked on an update to its LCP, however, that effort was paused as staff focused its attention to the on-going comprehensive General Plan Update program. As part of the LCP update, a vulnerability analysis of the coastal area was prepared and work commenced on a draft sea level rise adaptation plan.

The Zoning Ordinance implements General Plan policies through detailed development regulations, such as specific use types and building standards. Article 12 of the City's Zoning Ordinance establishes the legally defined boundaries of the Downtown District ("D District") and provides regulations specific to that area of the City (Attachment 4). Generally, the D District is bounded by

Harbor Drive to the north, the 5 freeway to the east, Seagaze Drive and Wisconsin Street to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Portions of the City's D District lie within the Coastal Zone. The specific purposes of the D District are to:

- A. To promote the long-term viability of and rejuvenation of the D District and to protect and enhance primarily boating and water-dependent activities; and secondarily other public-oriented recreation uses in the Oceanside Small Craft Harbor;
- B. Maintain and enhance an appropriate mix of uses; and
- C. Provide land use controls and development criteria consistent with the General Plan, the Redevelopment Plan, and the Local Coastal Program.

The D District consists of 23 special land use subdistricts with individual objectives including, but not limited to, commercial retail, high density residential, mixed-use, visitor-serving commercial, public transportation, public facilities, and lodging uses (illustrated in Attachment 5). High density residential developments are located in and around the D District, transit-oriented sites, and other locations along corridors where high density housing can leverage existing infrastructure and transit service.

Per Article 12 of the Zoning Ordinance, mixed-use development is defined as "the inclusion of multiple land use functions within the same building or project site through vertical mixed-use buildings or horizontal mixed-use sites." Multiple mixed-use developments have been constructed throughout the D District such as Pierside North, Pierside South, SALT, and Alta Oceanside. In the last few years, several mixed-use development projects have been approved through the City's entitlement process (but have yet to be fully constructed), including Sunsets 3.0, 712 Seagaze, Alta Oceanside, Modera Neptune, 401 Mission (Regal Theater), and 901 Mission (Attachment 6 - Downtown Developments map).

#### Sustainable Tourism Master Plan

Visit Oceanside and the City recently collaborated to develop a Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP) that was developed with input from residents, business owners, and stakeholders (Attachment 7). The STMP is a 10-year plan (2024-2034) that outlines an overall vision and strategy to develop Oceanside's visitor economy while providing strategies for stewarding tourism towards a sustainable future. Information is guided through the best practices and criteria set forth by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The STMP identifies an overarching vision and the experiences, infrastructure, and policies that would guide long-term sustainable, responsible development of Oceanside's tourism industry. Concurrently, such efforts would also help ensure the long-term health of Oceanside as a destination and the quality of life for Oceanside's residents and community as a whole.

Plan recommendations align with four pillars:

- Environmental quality
- Resident quality of life

- Quality of economy
- Visitor quality experience

The STMP identifies the Downtown area as a major opportunity site, and is particularly noted as one of the City's top assets as a popular shopping and dining node.

### Coast Highway Corridor

In April 2009, the City Council adopted the Coast Highway Vision and Strategic Plan (CHVSP), an advisory document which encompassed approximately 485 gross acres of land, extending approximately three miles from Harbor Drive to the north to the Buena Vista Lagoon to the south (Attachment 8). The CHVSP served as a blueprint for revitalization and enhancement of the Coast Highway Corridor, and provided strategies and action items for short and long-term physical enhancements along the Coast Highway Corridor. In August 2013, the City Council adopted the CHVSP. The Coast Highway Incentive District (CHID) was subsequently adopted in August 2019 but, as further described below, was never certified by the Coastal Commission and, therefore, never implemented. The CHID was originally intended as an optional development tool with the purpose of:

- Incenting redevelopment revitalization by streamlining the development review process and providing development incentives;
- Encouraging sustainable, high-quality development consistent with the intent and objectives of the CHVSP;
- Creating distinct pedestrian-oriented subareas;
- Promoting high quality urban and architectural design and variability of massing and height;
- Facilitating the creation of vibrant community places and tourist destinations; and,
- Treating Coast Highway as a complete, multi-modal street that is safe, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, accessible, attractive, visually and functioning and engaging for users of all ages and abilities, and integrated with adjacent neighborhoods.

With the goal of addressing the demand for housing while ensuring a compatible mix of land uses, street frontage activation, and attractive streetscape, the CHID included a residential incentive program that allowed new development in nodal areas to exceed maximum residential density standards in exchange for public benefits, as well as standalone residential in avenue segments. It provided developers with an alternative to, not a replacement of, existing zoning standards, allowing additional building height and density, standalone residential use, and expedited permit processing in exchange for public benefits and adherence to form-based development standards. A Local Coastal Plan Amendment (LCPA) to implement the CHID was originally filed with the Coastal Commission and deemed complete in August 2020. In January 2024, the Coastal Commission certified the LCPA with several suggested modifications. However, the certified LCPA was not brought forward for City Council consideration due to subsequent changes to state housing legislation including State Density

Bonus Law, which offers concessions and waivers to development standards (similar to those allowed for in the CHID) thereby rendering the CHID moot.

Currently, Coast Highway is a four-lane thoroughfare characterized by fast-moving traffic, lack of consistent pedestrian and bicycle amenities, inconsistent sidewalks, and a mix of commercial uses. In August 2019, the City Council approved Alternate 3 to the Coast Highway Corridor Environmental Impact Report. Now referred to as the Coast Highway Corridor Design Project, this Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project aims to improve mobility along a 3.5-mile stretch of Coast Highway from Sportsfisher Drive to Eucalyptus Street. The project would result in development of a “road diet,” mid-block crosswalks and roundabouts at select locations, and streetscape features that create space in the public right-of-way for bicycle facilities, improved sidewalks, and some additional landscaping. The project involves reducing the road from four lanes to two (one in each direction), creating a “complete street” that ensures that all forms of transportation - walking, biking, driving, and transit - are safely accommodated, installing roundabouts at key intersections, and using the reclaimed space for protected bike lanes, wider sidewalks, and landscaping (Attachment 9 - Conceptual Plans).

While other coastal cities such as Carlsbad and Solana Beach have reconsidered installation of roundabouts/traffic circles along their roads, the roundabouts proposed to be developed for the Coast Highway Corridor Design Project are proposed in a much different setting than those proposed in these other cities and uniquely and specifically designed to support the project objective of creating complete streets, calming traffic, and enhancing the pedestrian and bicyclist experience along the Coast Highway Corridor..

The City’s design team is finalizing construction documents for the entire corridor, which runs from Neptune Way to Oceanside Boulevard. Per prior City Council direction, the road diet improvements will not extend into South Oceanside. Construction will occur in phases, with Phase 1 focusing on the Downtown area from Neptune Way to Topeka Street. The estimated cost of Phase 1 construction is \$7,435,605.41. On January 9, 2026, the SANDAG Executive Committee approved a staff recommendation to allocate \$3,499,474 in Smart Growth Incentive Program funds for construction of Phase 1 improvements, with the City providing a \$3,936,375 match. This recommendation is pending final SANDAG Board approval which is expected shortly. Currently, staff and the design team are finalizing construction documents and related reports for Phase 1. Decorative hardscape elements are still being determined, with additional outreach planned. The City aims to complete all documents and be shovel-ready so construction can begin promptly if the SANDAG grant is officially awarded to the City. At this time, final construction drawings are anticipated to be complete by Spring 2026. The contractor bidding process is anticipated to be completed by Summer 2026, with construction anticipated to begin in Fall 2026, pending allocation of construction funds. As further discussed later in this report, staff is concurrently initiating efforts to identify potential traffic calming measures on adjacent parallel streets.

#### Nine Block Master Plan and Five Block Mixed-use Plan

In April 2000, as a requirement of the Oceanside LCP, the CDC approved the Nine Block Master Plan

for the redevelopment of nine blocks in the center of the downtown to assure the future development of 240 hotel rooms and 81,800 square feet of visitor-serving commercial (Attachment 10 - Nine Block Master Plan). In 2008, the CDC then approved the Five Block Mixed-Use Plan consisting of a Tentative Map, Development Plan, Regular Coastal Permit, and Conditional Use Permit for the development of Blocks 5, 18, 19, 20, and 21 (Attachment 11 - Five Block Mixed Use Plan). The Plan included 231 residential condominium units, a 124-unit hotel, and 48,000 square feet of ground-floor visitor serving commercial uses. The mixed-use plan represented a prorated share of the Nine Block Master Plan for consistency with the City's LCP.

The Five Block Mixed-Use Plan proposed a specific amount of development on each of the blocks. Plan modifications were permitted through a series of Substantial Conformity approvals that shifted the locations of dwelling units and commercial space to accommodate the development of the Springhill Suites Hotel on Block 21 and the Pierside North and South mixed-use buildings on Blocks 18 and 19, respectively. Present buildout of the Five Block Mixed-Use Plan currently meets over 100 percent of the hotel room requirement, 76 percent of the housing requirement, and 59 percent of its commercial requirement. With the addition of the recently approved Blocks 5 and 20 Project (17,406 square feet of commercial area and 373 dwelling units), the Five Block development will reach 95 percent (45,719 square feet) of the required commercial area and over 237 percent (549 units) of the dwelling unit requirement. Although the combined total commercial area falls short of the Five Block LCP requirement, the SALT building on Block 23 (originally planned as a parking structure with no assigned commercial component) was developed to include 7,817 square feet of commercial space. The combined commercial area of the existing and proposed Five Block development, as well as the SALT building (Block 23), equals 53,536 square feet which is 111 percent of the Five Block LCP commercial requirement. Additionally, ground floor commercial development for the remaining areas of the Nine Block Master Plan (Wyndham, Seabird, Mission Pacific) have a combined total of 34,893 square feet for a Nine Block grand total of 88,429 square feet (108 percent of the Nine Block LCP ground floor commercial area requirement). As such, with near build-out of the Nine Block Master Plan, there remains limited large-scale development opportunities in the Downtown core due to lack of vacant land, unless a developer was to buy out and consolidate smaller parcels into a larger one (s).

Should development continue to occur on any level, there are currently no objective design standards for the Downtown today beyond some general standards referenced in the LCP. According to state law, objective design standards are standards or guidelines that can be uniformly applied without involving personal or subjective judgement by public officials or decision makers (i.e., façade step-backs, building articulation, plaza design). Should staff be authorized to proceed, the guidelines would be published and known by both developers and public officials. While development of objective design standards would provide developers with guidance as they are designing Downtown projects, it is important to keep in mind that if the City were to develop objective design standards for the Downtown, State Density Bonus Law entitles project developers to request incentives/concessions that could result in such objective design standards being waived. **As Issue Area No. 1a of this staff report, staff requests CDC direction to prepare a Downtown Specific**

**Plan, including objective design standards.**Community Development Commission and Downtown Advisory Committee

Pursuant to the City Code, the City Council serves as the Community Development Commission (CDC), which is tasked with the duties and responsibilities of a planning commission relating to consideration of zone amendments, use permits, administration of the Local Coastal Plan, and other related entitlements specific to the Downtown. The City Council-appointed, seven-member Planning Commission does not consider land use entitlements within the Downtown Zoning district. Rather, matters requiring CDC action relating to building within the Downtown area is first considered by the Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC). That responsibility is held by the nine-member DAC, comprised of members tied to, or familiar with, Downtown business matters and the real estate industry with the following make up:

- Members from the Community At Large (2 members)
- Member to represent the Chamber of Commerce
- Member to represent Main Street Oceanside
- Member who is a residential owner-occupant within the Downtown Project Area
- Member who is a Business Owner in the City
- Member from the Planning Commission
- Member from the tourism industry
- Member of the Economic Development Commission

The purpose of the DAC is to advise and make recommendations to the CDC and its staff regarding proposed development regulations and entitlements within the Downtown. It provides guidance on Downtown-related matters including policy, practice, and technical matters, with the objective of facilitating the development process and encouraging the timely development of the Downtown Project Area.

The DAC bylaws and recent Work Plan are provided as Attachment 12. While the DAC has served in its capacity, there are questions as to whether it is the most appropriate body to make land use recommendations to the CDC. With the recent approval of development on Blocks 5 and 20, there is limited large scale development opportunities remaining in the Downtown area. Given that the DAC is a carryover from the former Redevelopment era, now is an opportune time to consider shifting DAC duties to the Planning Commission which would establish a more consistent, efficient and forward-facing development review process. **As Issue Area No. 2 of this staff report, staff proposes the CDC determine whether the DAC or Planning Commission should be the more appropriate recommending body for Downtown development projects.**

*Development Density*



Prior to 2019, the City had a density cap of 43 du/acre for mixed-use projects in the City's Downtown District. Although historically capped at 43 du/acre, certain developments (e.g., Pierside North and South) were allowed exceed this cap by amalgamating density derived from multiple city blocks. A 43 du/acre density cap is much lower than what would typically be expected in a thriving Transit Oriented Development District so consideration was given towards removing the historic cap. At that time, it was assumed that the City's existing height, setback and parking standards applicable to the Downtown area would serve to prevent projects with excessive density, even of the cap was lifted. However, subsequent changes to State Density Bonus Law have limited the City's ability to apply development standards on density bonus projects, thereby resulting in projects that were much more dense than ever anticipated. For example, without the proposed density limitation, a project could take advantage of unlimited density and pair it with a density bonus request that would allow up to five incentives/concessions and unlimited waivers from development standards.

The potential effect of removing the density cap in light of recent changes to State Density Bonus Law were realized during consideration of the 712 Seagaze Mixed-use Project. On January 26, 2022, the CDC adopted a resolution approving a Development Plan, Conditional Use Permit, and Request for Density Bonus to allow the construction of the proposed 712 Seagaze Mixed-use Project in downtown Oceanside. The 8-story mixed-use project would be approximately 147,060 square feet in size and consist of a total of 115 studio apartments. At that time, the proposed project included dedicating the top two floors as commercial hotel space with 64 rooms and 1,920 square feet of first floor space allocated for hotel lobby and leasing office, all within a freestanding building situated on a 15,589-square foot (0.36-acre) parcel. The project, as initially proposed, would have resulted in a 319 dwelling units per acre (du/acre) stand-alone building.

In 2023, the applicant informed City staff that recent changes in the economic environment made hotel financing more challenging and decided to pursue additional housing for the project rather than a hotel. Subsequently, the applicant submitted requests to remove the hotel rooms from the project scope and instead build a total of 179 studio apartments in a single building. Consequently, a project that would have had a density of 319 du/ac was approved at an increased density of 497 du/ac. The project is currently under construction as a 100 percent affordable housing development.

To demonstrate magnitude and scale, the following table provides the density of existing/fully constructed buildings in the Downtown District, as compared to the nearly 500 du/acre 712 Seagaze Project:

Project	Total Units	Acres	Density (du/acre)
Pierside North	66	1.17	56.41
Pierside South	110	1.14	96.49
Alta Oceanside	309	5.31	58.19

The following table provides the density of currently proposed or recently approved developments within the Downtown District:

Project	Total Units	Site Acreage	Density (du/ac)	Density Bonus Project	Status
401 Mission Ave (Regal Theaters)	326	2.72	120	Yes	Approved
Block 5	193	1.05	183	Yes	Approved
Block 20	177	1.02	174	Yes	Approved
901 Mission Ave	273	1.51	180	Yes	Approved
801 Mission Ave	230	1.5	153	Yes	Pending CDC Review
Oceanside Transit Center	547	10.6	51	No	Under Review (pending LCPA certification)
810 Mission Ave	206	1.42	145	Yes	Approved
Sunsets 3.0	180	0.77	233	Yes	Approved
901 Pier View Way	64	0.30	213	Yes	Approved
Modera Neptune	360	1.72	209	Yes	Approved

On October 18, 2023, the City Council/CDC approved a Zoning Text Amendment and LCPA to re-establish a maximum density cap within the Downtown District at 86 du/acre for mixed-use projects. With current SDBL provisions which provide for up to a 100% bonus if certain affordability thresholds are met, the proposed 86 du/acre cap could allow for projects developed up to 172 du/acre. As such, although the proposed maximum density would be a reduction from the existing unlimited density, the proposed LCPA would still be a 100 percent increase from the previous maximum base density of 43 du/acre and continue to support high density development in the City's urbanized downtown.

On November 7, 2023, the City submitted an LCPA application to the Commission entitled "Downtown Density Cap LCPA." The proposed LCPA was scheduled for Coastal Commission consideration at its September 12, 2024 meeting with a positive Coastal Commission staff recommendation of approval, as submitted. However, Coastal Commission staff subsequently elected to pull the item from the agenda for further evaluation. Since then, City staff have worked in cooperation with Coastal Commission staff to address those concerns (which included removal of the word "cap" due to potential conflicts with state housing law and setting a time limitation that runs parallel with the City's certified 2021-2029 Housing Element).

Even with the proposed 86 du/ac density limitation, Oceanside's density allowance would remain more than double that of many other coastal cities in San Diego County, as shown in the table (compiled at that time) below:

City	Maximum Density in Coastal Zone (du/acre)
Oceanside	Unlimited
Carlsbad	40

Chula Vista	105
Del Mar	25
Encinitas	Varies by residential zone
National City	48
San Diego	Extremely varied; dictated by specific zones and Coastal Height Limit restricting structures to 30 feet in many areas
Solana Beach	20

The Coastal Commission is scheduled to consider approval of the Downtown Density and Inclusionary Housing LCPAs at its February 5, 2026 meeting in Half Moon Bay.

The City's 2021-2029 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element was adopted by the City Council on June 16, 2021, re-adopted on September 13, 2023, and certified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development ("HCD") on November 14, 2023. The City proposes to implement the proposed maximum density for the Downtown District only, with a set expiration date of April 15, 2029, commensurate with the City's Housing Element 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle planning period (April 15, 2021 to April 15, 2029). Assumptions about future housing are based on the number of housing units the City has been assigned through the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process. The most recent RHNA requires that the City demonstrate capacity for roughly 5,400 new dwelling units through the 2021-2029 planning period.

Given the state's goal of increasing housing production in California, it is staff's understanding that Coastal Commission staff coordinated with HCD on the proposed LCPA in order to confirm that the City is in compliance with State housing law and that the proposed density limitation would not adversely affect the City's housing production obligations as described in the City's current adopted Housing Element. Based on review of the City's HCD certified Housing Element, none of the identified sites that the City is relying on to meet its RHNA obligations for 2021-2029 are located in the Downtown District. As such, the proposed density would be consistent with the City's certified Housing Element and with state housing law, which identifies 30 units per acre as the default density suitable for low- and moderate-income housing. Although the density maximum of 86 du/acre would be nearly triple that number, the proposed density limit would be compatible with existing and proposed densities in the Downtown District. Pursuant to the City's certified Housing Element, reducing the maximum allowable density for the Downtown District would not affect its ability to comply with the assigned RHNA numbers.

#### 5,500-unit Downtown Density Cap

In August 2019, the City Council approved a Zone Amendment and LCPA to remove the density limit and allow unlimited density while retaining the overall cap of 5,500 total units established by the City's Redevelopment Plan and codified in Article 12 (Downtown Zoning District). One of the findings the CDC must make when adopting mixed-use development plans is that with inclusion of the proposed project, the total number of dwelling units in the Downtown District would not exceed 5,500 units.

In October 2023, staff reported that there were approximately 2,300 units in the Downtown District.

Staff tallied how many units have either been approved or under review since then and have compiled the table provided in Attachment 13. Per this information, approximately 5,141 units have been constructed, approved, or are undergoing review; therefore, 359 units within the 5,500-unit cap remain.

Legislation effective in 2019 requires State Density Bonus Law to be administered in the Coastal Zone in a manner that is consistent and harmonized with the Coastal Act, thereby striking a balance between the state goals of promoting housing and protecting the coast. Moreover, Gov. Code 66300 (b)(1)(D)(ii) states, an agency shall not enact a development standard that has the effect of establishing or implementing any provision that “acts as a cap on the number of housing units that can be approved or constructed either annually or for some other time period.”

In December 2025, Coastal Commission staff asked if the City would be amenable to a Suggested Modification to the Downtown Density LCPA by requiring that the 5,500-unit cap for the Downtown District identified in the Redevelopment Plan be changed to a 5,500-unit “target” that may be exceeded. While the Zoning Ordinance specifies the 5,500-dwelling unit maximum for mixed-use projects in the Downtown District, the Housing Accountability Act (Government Code Section 65589.5) establishes the state’s overarching policy limiting a local government’s ability to deny, reduce the density of, or make infeasible housing development projects that are consistent with objective local development standards and contribute to meeting the housing need. To deny a housing project, local governments must make specified written findings based on the preponderance of the evidence that a specific, adverse health or safety impact exists. As such, the City may not have the ability to enforce the unit cap without identifying a specific, adverse health or safety impact that would result from doing so.

**As Issue Area No. 1b of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC discuss the existing 5,500-unit cap and Coastal Commission’s pending Local Coastal Plan Amendment (LCPA) Suggested Modification, which states “The Downtown District may have a target of 5,500 total dwelling units, although this target number (or any future target established by the City’s General Plan) may be exceeded.”**

### *Traffic/Circulation*

Concerns regarding traffic and circulation in the Downtown have increased due to the rising number of dwelling units constructed in the area. Most recently, the City’s efforts to move forward in development of the proposed Coast Highway Corridor Design Project and the City Council’s consideration of the proposed Oceanside Transit Center (OTC) Redevelopment Project have caused residents to question the impacts of growth and new development on local streets. Per the City’s Circulation Element of the General Plan, a “Local Street is designed to provide direct access to abutting properties and to provide connection between neighborhood streets and the collector street network.” Members of the Oceanside Coastal Neighborhood Association (OCNA) have raised concerns regarding routing traffic onto Local Streets such as Missouri Avenue, and the potential health and safety impacts it would cause on adjacent residents. Other community members have expressed that construction of the Coast Highway Corridor’s “road diet” would create alternate routes

using adjacent streets, particularly those located in residential neighborhoods. Article 12 of the Zoning Ordinance requires that the City develop and implement a D Downtown District Traffic Monitoring and Mitigation Plan. Staff recommends that, in addition to this mandated plan, City Council authorize a study of traffic calming measures that could be implemented on surrounding public streets which may be impacted by implementation of a road diet on Coast Highway. **As Issue Area No. 3 of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC direct staff to solicit consultant services for preparation of a Downtown-specific traffic analysis that explores the use of local streets and addresses potential traffic calming solutions to be employed on parallel streets in the near- and long-term.**

### *Parking*

In August 2018, the City Council approved a professional services agreement with a consultant to conduct parking data collection, facilitate community outreach, and prepare a Downtown Parking Action Plan (DPAP) for the D District (Attachment 14). Parking counts and occupancy rate data was collected during the peak and non-peak time periods of 2018. A 2019 pass-through memo regarding the DPAP provides a summary of the parking counts (Attachment 15). Implementation would be a phased approach consisting of near-term (12 months), mid-term (12 to 36 months) and long-term (3 to 5 years). Significant recommendations include the continuance of pay-by-plate parking pay station upgrades, expansion of license plate recognition to increase officer efficiencies, updates to the City Code, establishment of mobile payment apps for City lots, virtual beach and residential parking permits, a Downtown employee parking permit, a wayfinding program and continued community outreach (please reference pages 91 through 94 of the attached DPAP for more detailed descriptions). Attachment 16 provides a status update of each near-term, mid-term, and long-term steps in the DPAP. Most of the goals are operational items for the Parking Enforcement Program and the City's parking revenue collection systems. Attachment 17 includes a map illustrating current public parking opportunities in the Downtown. **As Issue Area No. 4 of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC authorize staff to solicit consultant services for conducting an updated DPAP to analyze the current state of parking in the Downtown and determine whether the 2018 DPAP remains relevant.**

### *Urban Design and Placemaking*

Recent entitlement projects brought forward for CDC consideration have raised questions about the City's direction on urban design elements such as parkways, sidewalks, window types for addressing bird strike concerns, and tree palette.

#### Parkways and Sidewalks

Per Section 31.5.1 of the City Code, a "parkway" is defined as "that portion of any public right-of-way, public street, or public easement lying between an established curb and sidewalk or between an established curb and the private property line or lying between the edge of any improved or unimproved roadway and the private property line." As urban design features, parkways provide landscaped buffers between pedestrians and the street, improve air and water quality through green

spaces that filter pollutants, and help soften the traditional urban aesthetic composed of hardscapes and buildings. The City has general design standards for parkways, depending on location. For example, City Code Section 31.5.3 states that parkways in residential zones can be altered or improved “using cobblestones, pebbles or other decorative rock so placed as to not constitute a hazard or danger to the public, nor to the public health and safety or to the improvements owned by the public.” For industrial and commercial areas, parkways may be installed with paving consisting of concrete or other non-slippery masonry materials, provided that consideration is given towards tree planting areas. The City’s Landscape Development Manual and Landscape Regulations promote parkway development using drought-tolerant native plants, conserving water, addressing fire safety, and maintaining clear sightlines for traffic, with requirements for street trees and maintenance by property owners.

While the Coast Highway Corridor Design provides its own parkway design standards, the remaining Downtown areas do not. During the CDC’s recent consideration of the proposed 810 Mission Avenue Project, a resident requested that the condition of approval regarding frontage improvements require the developer to not only construct a new curb, gutter, and sidewalk but also a parkway. The resident also brought up the topic of sidewalk design within the Downtown, requesting that sidewalks constructed as part of the proposed project be finished to “match historic street paving” described as evenly spaced squares (approximately 2.5’ x 2.5’) (Attachment 18). Staff recommends that future conditions of approval pertaining to Downtown frontage improvements continue to require these specific parkway and sidewalk design parameters. **As Issue Area No. 5 of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC direct staff to develop consistent design standards for parkways and sidewalk paving patterns in Downtown, separate or as a part of the proposed Downtown Specific Plan.**

### Bird Strikes

The issue of window type in regard to bird strike concerns was raised by constituents and the non-profit organization Preserve Calavera during the CDC’s consideration of the proposed 401 Mission Avenue, Oceanside Transit Center, and 810 Mission Avenue projects. A bird strike for a building is defined as the collision of a bird with any part of a man-made structure, typically involving glass windows or facades. Per the attached “fact sheet” created by Lights Out Connecticut and forwarded to staff: “Window collisions are a major cause of bird mortality in the United States. New bird-friendly building technologies are effective and affordable, providing important co-benefits for human health, energy efficiency, ecological resilience and savings” (Attachment 19). Applicants of the Downtown projects mentioned above have not had a unified, consistent response towards the bird strike issue as bird strike-conscious windows tend to be more expensive. In addition, based on conversations with downtown developers and property owners, it is questionable as to whether Downtown buildings have experienced issues with bird strikes to a degree that would justify a mandate regarding window design. **As Issue Area No. 6 of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC direct staff to evaluate window design standards that address anti-bird strike concerns.**

### Palm and Canopy Trees

Questions regarding the Downtown tree palette have also been raised with recently proposed development projects considered by the CDC, particularly in regards to the continued existence of palm trees along D District corridors. The City's 2006 Interim Tree Plan has historically been used as a guide for landscape design in the D District (Attachment 20). Per the Interim Tree Plan, the Mission Avenue Corridor provides a row of palm trees framing the street while respecting its existing view corridor. While some have questioned the planting of palm trees in the Downtown area, there are others who strongly believe that palm trees are a vital component of the City's beachside ambiance and deserve preservation. Therefore, any decisions regarding the removal or elimination of palm trees in future planning efforts should only happen following a robust community discussion. **As Issue Area No. 7 of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC direct staff that during design of Downtown development projects, all existing palm trees along Mission Avenue should remain in place. If a palm tree is removed along that corridor, it may only be replaced with a native palm or shade tree. If the City Council desires preparation of an updated Downtown Tree Plan, staff recommends that it be developed with the proposed Downtown Specific Plan.**

#### Cultural Arts District, Gateway Signage and Placemaking

Various documents promote the value of Downtown as an exciting opportunity for placemaking, public art, and culture significance. The STMP calls for activated plazas that connect Oceanside's beaches with its Downtown, thus giving visitors a sense of place and coastal preservation. The Oceanside CA Cultural Arts District is one of 24 designated state districts. The City's O'Arts Master Plan (Attachment 21) for the Arts fosters the goal to "enhance Oceanside's Cityscape through creative placemaking as defined by the community's vision and aspirations." Overall, arts and culture initiatives in the downtown distinguish Oceanside from other communities. Arts organizations, venues, and festivals serve as important pillars for community celebration and engagement.

Within the last two years, the City Council has approved Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects for the Downtown, including those related to placemaking, gateway signage, and wayfinding. The City Council approved a Fiscal Year 2024-25 CIP project entitled "Community Entry Way Signage Study" (\$100,000 allocated) to evaluate opportunities relating to branding, wayfinding, and entryway beautification efforts in an effort to provide a cohesive look within the City. Opportunities could include wayfinding signage, community identity elements such as murals, as well as public art at major entryways to the City. For Fiscal Year 2025-26, the City Council approved two CIP projects: Downtown Placemaking Study (\$150,000 allocated) and Welcome to Oceanside Sign - Design (\$600,000 allocated). In coordination with the Community Entry Way Signage Study, the placemaking study would evaluate opportunities for potential creative placemaking in the Downtown area. In the urban planning realm, placemaking is a people-first approach that can be defined as "the collaborative process of transforming public spaces into vibrant, community-centered destinations where people want to live, work, play, and connect, focusing on local assets, culture, and well-being rather than just physical design. It's a people-first approach that strengthens the bond between communities and the places they share, creating spaces that are functional, engaging, inclusive, and foster a strong sense of local identity and shared value." The Welcome to Oceanside Sign Project includes the design of an archway sign featuring the word "Oceanside," to be prominently installed in

Downtown. This iconic gateway element would enhance the City's identity, create a welcoming sense of place, and serve as a visually striking landmark for both residents and visitors. A request for proposals (RFP) for the proposed Welcome to Oceanside Sign Project was distributed in November 2025, with proposals due in mid-December 2025 (Attachment 22). One proposal was received. Staff is in the process of reviewing the proposal and determining next steps.

An RFP for the wayfinding and placemaking projects is under development. At minimum, the consultant scope of work would include:

- Meeting with City staff to develop project objectives and priorities
- Drafting a tentative project schedule
- Reviewing relevant documents pertaining to wayfinding and signage, as well as City standards for development, siting, and implementation
- Analyzing existing wayfinding conditions in the Downtown and identifying potential placemaking locations in the Downtown (placemaking locations may be temporary or permanent)
- Identifying potential opportunities and constraints relating to both Downtown wayfinding and placemaking
- Developing and conducting a robust community outreach plan that gathers feedback from a diverse group of people
- Summarizing project information and providing recommendations in a formal report to the City
- Preparing a project implementation plan with project cost estimates

In an effort to test out placemaking opportunities in the Downtown, staff recommends developing a pilot project through the potential closure of Tremont between Mission Avenue and Pier View Way. Closing the street would prohibit vehicles from driving and parking in this area, thereby facilitating pedestrian access and promoting storefront businesses to spread into the public realm and activate its surroundings. Moveable tables and chairs, impromptu music performances, landscaping, public art, and outdoor lighting could create a unique experience for residents and visitors in the Downtown. Staff recognizes such a closure has the potential to impact current businesses that front on that segment of Tremont or rely on that area for parking and/or access. Therefore, prior to implementation, staff, in collaboration with MainStreet Oceanside, would conduct additional outreach with affected businesses to ensure their comments were considered prior to making any final decisions on design or implementation. **As Issue Area No. 8a of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC provide input on the proposed scope of work for the proposed Downtown Wayfinding/Placemaking Study.** In exploring placemaking, staff would like to develop a placemaking pilot project in the Downtown. **As Issue Area No. 8b of this staff report, staff recommends the CDC authorize implementation of a placemaking pilot project showcasing**



**possible placemaking ideas (i.e. outdoor games, pop up park, performance spaces, moveable seating areas, temporary art installation) by closing and activating Tremont Street between Mission Avenue and Pier View Way during Summer 2026.**

#### Summary

Oceanside's Downtown is a valuable resource to the community and discourse regarding its development are ongoing, particularly in consideration of recent entitlement projects. Staff have provided several recommendations for CDC consideration. With direction from the CDC on specific issue areas, staff will return to the City Council or CDC with items requiring approvals as soon as feasible.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

For discussion purposes only. An analysis of fiscal impact will be provided as individual recommendations are brought forward for City Council or CDC consideration, as appropriate.

#### **CITY ATTORNEY'S ANALYSIS**

The City Attorney will work with staff to draft appropriate implementing documents for future City Council/CDC consideration as needed.

Prepared by: Darlene E. Nicandro, Development Services Director  
Submitted by: Jonathan Borrego, City Manager

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Staff Report
2. Redevelopment Boundary Map
3. Map of Coastal Zone
4. Article 12 of Zoning Ordinance
5. Redevelopment Zoning Map
6. Map of Pending Downtown Developments
7. Sustainable Tourism Master Plan
8. Coast Highway Vision and Strategic Plan
9. Coast Highway Corridor Design - Conceptual Plans (January 2024)
10. Nine Block Master Plan
11. Five Block Mixed Use Plan
12. DAC Bylaws and Recent Work Plan
13. Downtown Unit Count
14. DPAP for the Downtown District
15. 2019 DPAP Pass-through Memo
16. DPAP Implementation Status
17. Public Parking Lots Handout
18. Resident Recommendation
19. Lights Out Connecticut Bird Strikes Fact Sheet

20. 2006 Interim Tree Plan

21. O'Arts Master Plan

22. RFP for the proposed Welcome to Oceanside Sign Project