



PLANNING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

Date: August 19, 2026 for August 26, 2026 Scheduled Meeting
To: Planning Commission
From: Koren Manning, Director of Planning and Development
Services, and Executive Secretary
Subject: C8-25-03 CODE Tucson '26 Unified Development
Code Amendments (Citywide)

Page 1 of 6

Issue – This is the first of two study sessions to discuss the proposed Community Ordinances & Development Enhancements (CODE) Tucson '26 code update package, which contains amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC) and Tucson City Code. At the December 16, 2025 study session, the Mayor and Council directed staff to begin the process of amending the *Unified Development Code, Administrative Manual, Technical Standards Manual, and City Codes* to achieve the development goals identified by staff and stakeholders (Attachment A).

Over the past eight months, PDSD has conducted outreach to the public, local groups, and review staff through presentations, meetings, and two surveys, which recorded over 369 responses. Stakeholders submitted additional letters and response documents. The responses from the surveys, community meetings, and all other public comments received are shown in Attachment B. The result is a proposal for 78 specific code amendments, informed by the outreach, to the various codes.

The proposed amendments have been divided into the following eight themes:

- Sign Code Reauthorization - Update sign standards to improve organization, interpretation, and use. Remove sunset date.
- Clarify Parking Standards – Simplify parking requirements to better align with how sites are used today.
- Sidewalk Repair - Clarify sidewalk requirements on public streets, as regulated in the City Code.
- Code Clarity and Usability - Clean-up items that improve wording, organization, consistency, and ease of use.
- Modernize Design Standards – Update design-related standards to reflect current practices, technologies, and development needs.
- Remove Barriers to Housing - Support housing flexibility and reduce avoidable regulatory barriers.
- Simplification of Review Processes - Administrative or procedural changes intended to make reviews clearer, more predictable, efficient, and reflective of current practices.
- Emerging Land Uses and Adaptive Reuse - Respond to newer land uses, changing business models, and reuse of existing buildings.

The first study session will address the themes of Sign Code Reauthorization, Clarify Parking Standards, Sidewalk Repair, Code Clarity and Usability, and Modernize Design Standards. Please

note, the proposed Sidewalk Repair amendments are included for reference as they have been presented as part of the CODE package but as these amendments are to the City Code rather than the UDC, these proposed updates are not within the direct purview of the Planning Commission.

The second study session planned for September 16, 2026 will cover the themes of Remove Barriers to Housing, Simplify Review Processes, and Emerging Land Uses and Adaptive Reuses. Two study sessions are planned due to the volume of proposed code changes to ensure that there is adequate time for consideration, questions, and feedback.

An Information Packet that contains an overview of each proposed UDC change has been developed (Attachment C). Additionally, a list of additional code changes identified after the community meetings and additional feedback is provided (Attachment D). All proposed amendments to the City Code are available on the CODE Tucson '26 website at <https://tinyurl.com/5sebrnuf>.

Staff Recommendation – Staff requests feedback and input from the Planning Commission on the proposed code amendments.

Background – On December 16, 2025, the Mayor and Council directed PDSD staff to develop a proposal for amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC) and City Code. Staff were directed to engage stakeholders, the public, and department review staff in developing the proposal. The amendments are intended to improve code clarity and usability, simplify review processes, and improve the quality of reviews and development. Below is an overview of the outreach to date which informed this proposal.

This proposal follows a previous code package which amended the City's development codes by addressing duplicative or confusing processes. This package included ten code amendments aimed at improving PDSD processes, removing barriers to small-scale infill, simplifying development standards, and correcting minor code errors. These amendments were adopted by Mayor and Council on March 21, 2023, as code amendment C8-22-06.

At that time, PDSD staff informed Mayor and Council that other potential code amendments had been identified, and the department suggested repeating this process with another code amendment package in approximately 24 months. Some items identified in that process are included in the CODE Tucson '26 update package.

PDSD Stakeholder Meetings, Surveys and Stakeholder Outreach

A primary objective of the CODE Tucson '26 package was to reach out for feedback from community members, the development community, stakeholder groups, City staff, and relevant boards and commissions on how to improve the City's codes and address the eight themes listed above. PDSD conducted two public surveys and held two community outreach meetings to introduce and gather feedback on the proposed code changes.

PDSD staff conducted two online surveys to gather community ideas and input on the proposed code changes. The first survey, which was open from December 22, 2025, to February 25, 2026, asked community members what changes they would like to see to the Unified Development Code.

The survey questions were based on the level of experience the respondents had with the code, from no experience to occasional users to frequent users. A total of 159 responses were received, with 63 reporting they had no experience with the code, 67 reporting they had some experience, and 29 reporting they were frequent users. A broad array of responses was received, but many centered around increased infill, parking standards, neighborhood preservation, and improving review processes. The results of the survey are included in Attachment B starting on page 3.

Following the initial survey, two community outreach meetings were held in early June (see materials in Attachment E). The first meeting took place on June 1, 2026, in person during the evening. The second meeting was held virtually on June 8, 2026 during lunch hour. There was a total of 58 participants between the meetings, with 39 at the first meeting and 19 at the second. Comments received included those related to process changes, the need to remove barriers to housing, and parking standards. The comments received are contained in Attachment B starting on page 40.

PDSD also conducted a second survey that was open from June 1 to July 8, 2026 (Attachment B). The department received 47 responses that emphasized several key priorities. Respondents emphasized removing barriers to housing by simplifying codes and addressing housing affordability. They also emphasized reforming parking standards through reducing or removing parking minimums and adding flexibility for modern development patterns. Additional priorities included streamlining permitting processes by simplifying workflows that add complexity and time to the development review process, clarifying code language to reduce confusion and improve code clarity, and updating design standards to continue creating flexibility for accessory dwelling units, middle housing, and adaptive reuse. The complete responses to this survey are contained in Attachment B, starting on page 64.

Since Mayor and Council initiated the code update, PSDS has provided regular updates to its development stakeholder group, briefed and met with the Metropolitan Pima Alliance (MPA) briefed the Tucson Association of Realtors, briefed each of the four historic zone advisory boards, and participated in two meetings with the sign stakeholder group. PSDS will also be briefing the Commission on Equitable Housing and Development (CEHD) in September. In addition to the meetings, extensive written comments were provided by both the MPA and Tucson for Everyone. These are shown in Attachment B, starting on pages 116 and 128 respectively. Feedback received has been integrated into the code package, as appropriate, and drove most of the additional items added to the package following the community meetings and follow-up survey.

Present Considerations

The CODE Tucson '26 code update package includes 78 specific code amendments divided into eight overall themes. The themes and specific code amendments being considered at the August 26 Planning Commission Study Session are shown below. The remaining themes will be considered at the subsequent Planning Commission Study Session planned for September 16, 2026. More details on specific changes are available in Attachment D, and redlines showing the proposed code change language are contained in Attachment F. This attachment also includes icons designating each respective theme near the proposed code change. Changes added since the community engagement meetings are highlighted in blue, but only major changes are called out in Attachment D.

Themes for First Study Session	Total Number of Items
Clarify Parking Standards	6
Code Clarity and Usability	15
Modernize Design Standards	11
Sidewalk Repair	1
Sign Code Reauthorization	10

Themes for Second Study Session	Total Number of Items
Emerging Land Uses and Adaptive Reuse	15
Remove Barriers to Housing	4
Simplify Review Processes	16

Proposed Amendments

Below is an overview of the proposed amendments that will be the focus of the August 26, 2026 Planning Commission Study Session.

Clarify Parking Standards - The CODE Tucson '26 package six proposed changes to clarify parking standards. These changes are intended to simplify parking requirements to better align with how sites are used today. They include changes to parking calculations for mixed-use developments that would remove separate parking calculations so that all building area is calculated the same. Also proposed are simplification of parking requirements for recreational uses, and removal of parking requirements for self-service uses that do not have staff on site.

Following the engagement process, additional changes include allowing for temporary parking with special events, removing the 50% limit for bars and restaurant parking in shopping centers in order to receive a reduced parking requirement, and the removal of requirements to include outdoor seating as part of the gross floor area when considering the minimum amount of parking.

Code Clarity and Usability – The code package includes 15 items to improve code clarity and usability. These are cleanup items that improve wording, organization, consistency, and ease of use. They are intended to provide clearer terms and definitions, updated references and responsibilities, updated process and administrative requirements, and address necessary technical corrections. An example of these changes is the clarification of when accessory uses are permitted. Currently, any accessory use permitted in a zone may also be permitted as a principal use, per a Zoning Administrator determination. The proposed change clarifies that uses permitted in a particular zone can be a principal or accessory use.

Following the engagement process, additional changes were added to address further typos, remove obsolete definitions, remove an expired exemption, correct the location of the definition for smoke shop, and include a missing graphic that should have been part of the Community Corridors Tool (CCT) code package.

Modernize Design Standards - A total of 11 updates are proposed to modernize design standards. These entail the update of design-related standards to reflect current practices, technologies, and

development needs. They include minimal increases to height standards for small and accessory structures, changes related to setback placement and site layout, a one-foot increase in maximum wall heights, minor changes to use specific design standards, and alignment to construction noise regulations and adaptive reuse mandated by State law under Senate Bill 1182 and House Bill 2110 (Attachment G).

Following community engagement, the construction start time was reduced from 7:00 am to 6:00 am. The setback standards for garages, carports, and shade structures in front yards were clarified, some restrictions for donation centers were removed, and the height for certain accessory structures was clarified. Minor edits were also made to the proposed adaptive reuse language.

Sidewalk Repair – This proposed change to the City Code would clarify sidewalk maintenance requirements on public streets. These changes are being proposed because sidewalk maintenance standards and areas of responsibility are unclear in the present code. The updates would establish a clear process to address violations and refine language. This will make expectations clearer for sidewalk-related requirements. This component of the CODE Tucson package is being presented to the Planning Commission for awareness. However, these amendments are not subject to Planning Commission review or recommendation as these regulations are not within the UDC.

Sign Code Reauthorization - The City's Sign Code was originally set to sunset on August 31, 2026. Mayor and Council have extended the sunset date to February 28, 2027 (Attachment H), but the Sign Code still requires reauthorization and removal of the sunset date requirement. The existing code has been reviewed, and PDS staff has coordinated with a sign stakeholder group on where adjustments could be made as part of the reauthorization process. The current sign code, originally adopted by Mayor and Council in 2017, remains in effect.

The proposed amendments would reauthorize the sign code and remove any future sunset dates. The existing Sign Design Review Committee, which has not met since 2020, would be removed from the code, and review would be provided by a design professional. Additionally, adjustments and clarifications to standards related to pole signs versus monument signs, calculations based on frontage and other edits are proposed.

Plan Tucson Considerations

The changes proposed in the CODE Tucson '26 package help advance several Plan Tucson goals and policies. These include Goal 5, to *expand affordable and accessible housing options*, which the package advances through proposed code amendments that remove barriers to housing. The proposed changes also advance Goal 12, to *strengthen the local and regional economy to provide opportunities for all Tucsonans to thrive*. The proposed amendments that simplify review processes, address emerging land uses and adaptive reuse, modernize design standards, and clarify parking standards all support this goal by updating the City's development codes in ways that help improve economic conditions in Tucson.

The CODE Tucson '26 updates also help advance several policies contained within Plan Tucson. These include Land Use Policy 9, to *update permitting and development processes to ensure efficient, transparent, and timely review periods that promote the best community outcomes*; and Economy Policy 12, to *create a business supportive climate through regulations and policies*; and

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM
CODE TUCSON '26 CODE AMENDMENT
PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION

Page: 6 of 6

Governance Policy 13, to *update internal city processes for increased clarity and efficient use of resources and align with City values.*

Attachments:

- A. Mayor and Council Legal Action Report dated December 16, 2025
- B. Public Comments Received as of August 13, 2026
- C. CODE Tucson '26 Information Packet
- D. CODE Tucson '26, Information Packet Addendum
- E. Community Meeting Presentation and Posters
- F. Proposed CODE Tucson '26 Amendments
- G. Senate Bill 1182 and House Bill 2110
- H. Sign Code Sunset Date Extension