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Planning Commission  
City of San Luis Obispo  
990 Palm St.  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Subject: Zoning Regulations Update

Dear Chair Fowler and Commissioners,

The City of San Luis Obispo's extensive undertaking to update its zoning program is an essential opportunity to achieve consistency with the 2035 Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) and to make significant improvements to outdated policies which don't fully support our community's modern needs, daily uses and the overall vision the city has for its future.

We have long anticipated this process as a necessary assessment in order to bring our existing regulations up to date, a process that is important to our organization because zoning can help or hinder economic development, the creation of housing, how residents and visitors are effectively served and the enhancement of unique neighborhoods, districts or areas ripe for revitalization. There is also ample opportunity for a clearer, more user-friendly program and rezoning that will allow more opportunities for commercial, office and residential space.

Through our Chamber volunteer task force's work over the last 15 months, we have the following recommendations and comments for your consideration:

## **Consolidate Uses**

*We support proposed edits that will provide more clarity in the zones so staff, advisory body members and community members that are working to thoughtfully plan our community have clear direction.*

- The consolidation of office zones, uniting medical and dental uses and combining of like land uses and activities is a positive shift from the existing regulations
- The way residents, employers, employees and visitors work live and play has evolved and so should the zoning regulations that dictate how and where those activities can occur
- In order to provide for smaller neighborhoods that are a distance from larger commercial areas, we encourage a collection of allowable uses such as for food markets, urgent care offices, etc.
- We believe addressing the cannabis overlay zones as an effort separate from this comprehensive zoning update is a good choice

## **Allow Flexibility for the Creation of More Housing**

*Doing so will help accomplish the housing goals outlined in the LUCE, Housing Element, and Economic Development Strategic Plan and other conceptual documents.*

- Ensure that development standards provide for maxed density as allowed by the General Plan
- Allow more development standard flexibility and provide limitations when adjacent to R1 or R2 zones
- Enable more compact form with some strategic up-zoning in what are now R2 areas in the southwest part of town

## **Envision a More Livable City and Vibrant Downtown**

*The downtown has to grow economically in its offerings in order to continue to be relevant to its visitors and residents.*

- With the changing face of retail, we strongly encourage allowing more office uses on the ground floor level
- We would like to see an emphasis on the utilization of form based codes in downtown
- Consider extending the boundaries of the downtown district and applying downtown development standards up Monterey Street to Pepper and the same towards mid-Higuera down to Marsh Street
- Support our Height for Housing concept citywide and particularly in the downtown (see attachment), a concept which allows more certainty in the application and approval process by not changing - but rather utilizing - the city's existing codes and height regulations

**Provide for Greater Accessibility and Mobility**

*The current parking regulations are suited for traditional parking, and, we cannot “social engineer” people out of their cars - consider what the supply of parking is as well as the needs of an aging motorist population and employees that are forced to commute.*

- Take a proactive approach to residential parking management programs
- Downtown vitality is at risk when parking is eliminated, carefully consider the different impacts of parking reductions or removal on certain types of zoned areas and businesses

**Modernize the Review Process**

*New development shouldn't reflect existing development, as in many cases, this is not the type of build out that the LUCE envisions - rather, new development or new proposed uses should be compatible with existing structures yet consistent with the vision adopted in the LUCE and many other documents such as the Housing Element and Downtown Concept Plan - therefore, we believe there is great value in the option of director approval.*

- We support the proposed refinements to the city advisory body process for greater efficiency and certainty in the approval or denial process
- The review threshold can be further lowered through the use of a checklist process over the counter
- The creation of a formalized pre-application process will set expectations for the applicant and staff, identify nonconformity and provide less waste in time and resources

Our Chamber supports many of the aspirational goals contained in the LUCE which were developed with extensive community input. In short, it's now time to implement those goals.

We very much appreciate staff's engagement with us over the last several years as we have looked forward to participating in the update process and the last 15 months with our task force that has been taking a deep dive into the white papers, Commission meetings, roundtables and community forums. We thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Charlene Rosales  
Director of Governmental Affairs