



SAN DIEGO 2026 LDC UPDATE CHEATSHEET

A HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF KEY
CHANGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS CITYWIDE

A Note from Heather Medina, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB Founder, ArchiDev Studio

In San Diego, the success of a project is often determined long before design begins. Entitlement strategy, code alignment, and regulatory positioning are what ultimately shape feasibility, timeline, and risk.

This cheat sheet was created to provide a clear, high-level breakdown of the 2026 Land Development Code updates and what they mean for development projects across the city. Our goal is to help you quickly identify where opportunities are emerging, where constraints may be tightening, and how to position your projects more strategically from the outset.

At ArchiDev Studio, we approach every project with a code-first mindset—aligning design with entitlement strategy to reduce risk and maximize yield.

We hope this resource supports smarter decisions, stronger underwriting, and more predictable outcomes in your development pipeline.

— Heather Medina, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB

Disclaimer: This cheat sheet provides a high-level overview of proposed 2026 Land Development Code updates and their potential impact on projects. It is not a substitute for detailed code review or professional consultation. Final regulations are subject to change, and project-specific assumptions should be independently verified.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Citywide and Downtown updates, filtered to high- and medium-impact changes.

Each item includes:

- Amendment number
- Update summary
- Developer considerations
- Impact level
- Strategic opportunities
- Affected project types



GENERAL SAN DIEGO CITYWIDE UPDATES

NUMBER	NAME OF UPDATE	WHAT IT DOES	DEVELOPER CONCERN	IMPACT LEVEL	OPPORTUNITY/STRATEGY	DEALS IMPACTED
#1	Administrative Fines	Allows administrative fines for LDC violations	Increased financial exposure	MEDIUM	Tighten QA/QC Ensure compliance	All projects
#3	Mixed-Use FAR Bonus	FAR bonus of +0.5 for mixed-use with onsite affordable	Requires affordability	HIGH	Target TPAs Stack bonuses	Mixed-Use
#5	Offsite Affordable Flexibility	Removes threshold restriction	Strategic placement needed	MEDIUM	Decouple affordable Optimize land value	Affordable
#6	Complete Communities (For-Sale)	Adds for-sale option to CCHS	Misinterpretation risk	HIGH	Rental still allowed Condo optional	CCHS
#7	CCHS DIF Changes	Restricts fee waivers for small units	Micro-unit impact	HIGH	Shift to larger units	Multifamily
#12	DU vs MDU Clarification	Clarifies unit definitions	Interpretation changes	MEDIUM	ADU positioning	ADU
#17	Fire Separation	Updates setbacks	Loss of area	MEDIUM	Integrate early	All
#25	Affordable Replacement	Aligns replacement with state law	Higher obligations	HIGH	Underwrite early	Multifamily
#28	Coastal Replacement	Aligns coastal rules	Higher compliance	HIGH	Plan early	Coastal
#29	CCHS Offsite	Tightens financing rules	Funding restrictions	MEDIUM	Structure early	CCHS
#34	Tree Protection	Strengthens tree rules	Site constraints	MEDIUM	Design integration	Infill
#39	Tentative Maps	Updates subdivision process	Timing complexity	MEDIUM	Coordinate timelines	Subdivision
#40	Small Lot Multi-Unit	Ministerial subdivision	None	HIGH	Expand pipeline	Small Lot
#41	Small Lot SF	Extends subdivision rules	None	HIGH	Unlock density	ADU
#43	Airport Overlay	Updates ALUCP	New constraints	MEDIUM	Early diligence	Airport
#45	Parking Reduction	Allows shared parking	Site-specific	MEDIUM	Partner with churches	Affordable
#50	Shared Housing Bonus	Incentivizes co-living	Financing risk	MEDIUM	Explore co-living	Multifamily
#58	Multi-Unit in SF Zones	Allows multi-units	Community pushback	HIGH	Unlock density	Missing Middle
#70	ADU Bonus Updates	Refines ADU rules	Tightening	MEDIUM	Recheck yield	ADU
#72	Non-Residential Parking	Updates ratios	Parking impacts	MEDIUM	Optimize design	Mixed-Use
#75	ESL Coastal Bluffs	Updates ESL rules	Environmental constraints	HIGH	Early studies	Coastal
#76	Moderate Income Housing	Incentivizes moderate income	Feasibility	MEDIUM	Target workforce	Multifamily
#91	Freeway Buffers	Adds freeway regs	Reduced area	MEDIUM	Design buffers	Infill

DOWNTOWN ONLY UPDATES

NUMBER	NAME OF UPDATE	WHAT IT DOES	DEVELOPER CONCERN	IMPACT LEVEL	OPPORTUNITY/STRATEGY	DEALS IMPACTED
DT #2	Coastal Process Reduction	Allows Process 1 instead of Process 2 for coastal projects using bonus programs	Removes discretionary review	HIGH	Stack density bonus + coastal Fastest entitlement pathway downtown	Downtown Coastal High-Rise
DT #5	Homeownership Bonus	Adds density bonus for projects with for-sale units	Subdivision + condo complexity	MEDIUM	Hybrid rental/for-sale deals Exit strategy flexibility	Mixed-Use High-Rise For-Sale
DT #6	Small Lot Development Incentive	Unlocks density + regulatory relief for sub-15,000 SF sites	None — upside	HIGH	Target overlooked parcels Increase yield on constrained sites	Small Lot Infill
DT #7	Middle Income Housing Incentives	Adds incentives for 100% middle-income housing	Financing viability	MEDIUM	Workforce housing niche Institutional capital alignment	Multifamily
DT #8	C Street FAR Multiplier	100% FAR bonus stacking multiplier	Density concentration	HIGH	Corridor acquisitions Max FAR stacking	Transit-Oriented High-Rise
DT #9	Tree Preservation Bonus	FAR bonus for preserving trees + penalties for removal	Site constraints	MEDIUM	Use trees as FAR assets	Urban Infill
DT #13	FAR Bonus Program Clarifications	Clarifies how multiple FAR bonus programs can be applied and combined	Confusion around stacking rules	MEDIUM	Greater certainty Reduce entitlement risk	Downtown Mixed-Use