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reading for
you!*

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What's New

In land use planning

RFM Land Use Consulting

Happy New Year!

Well, welcome to 2026! Happy New Year!

This past year (2025) went fast, at least for me. In some ways that's a good thing, as it means I was busy running the business. In some way, it's a bad thing, as I have no idea where the year went!

The New Year brings new challenges...the prospect of new services, opportunities for community outreach (both to existing and potentially new clients), and a whole lot more!

In February, I'll be celebrating my second year in business! I'm excited about that! But I can't believe that the time has gone by so quickly.

In the coming year, I look forward to new

challenges, new clients, and continuing to support existing clients.

Join me on...

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CEQA Legislation and Housing

CEQA reforms, primarily through AB 130 and SB 131 (signed in to law in June 2025), significantly streamlined housing development by creating new exemptions, accelerating environmental review, and limiting litigation for infill projects. Farmworker housing, and other qualifying development, aiming to boost housing supply by reducing regulatory hurdles and costs. These laws exempt certain projects from full CEQA review, establish timelines for agency action, and streamline rezonings for housing elements, making a major policy shift to tackle the housing crisis.

New exemptions: exempt infill, multifamily housing projects meeting criteria (e.g. site size, residential use percentage) from CEQA; limited review for near-exempt projects; for projects narrowly missing an exemption, review only focuses on the specific conditions causing the issue, excluding alternatives or growth-inducing impacts.

The bill includes the streamlining of rezoning for housing element implementation from CEQA. This will allow jurisdictions to better align their available land for housing with the proper zoning in an easier way to meet

CEQA Legislation and Housing (cont.)



their RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Assessment) numbers. Litigation is reduced that tends to delay projects, making development more predictable.

The broad context of these bills is to address California's severe housing shortage and affordability. The scope extends past housing, to include infrastructure, wildlife prevention and advanced manufacturing.

The bills took effect immediately upon signing.

The new exemptions are already having an impact on local planning in California.

The new exemptions cover infill projects of up to 20 acres. And cities are pushing back. Just because a project is exempt from CEQA doesn't mean it automatically gets approved. Recently, for example, Glendale turned down a major housing project – after finding it exempt from CEQA under the new law.



To Laugh, or Not to Laugh, that is the Joke...

I accidentally drank a bottle of invisible ink...I'm in the Emergency Room now waiting to be seen...

What's the difference between a bad joke and a dad joke? The first letter...

Someone ripped the fifth month out of my calendar...now I'm totally dismayed...

What pants do psychics where? Paranormal pants....

===

Yes, Planners do have a sense of humor!!

Navigating Zoning Laws

What does zoning compliance mean? It refers to ensuring that a property's usage, setup, or development conforms to local municipal or county regulations for land use. It involves careful review of zoning maps and ordinances to help avoid potential legal issues.

The zoning ordinance, typically in conjunction with the general plan, will indicate what one can do on the property, and what permits may be required. It won't indicate anything about building permits, as it's assumed for the construction of any structure a building permit will be required in any event. Typical land use permits needed (for anything above the "by-right" level), will include: zoning permits, variance (height or setback) permits, or conditional use permits.

It is usually a good idea to avoid pitfalls related to the zoning ordinance by going through the proper channels and steps

to get to where one wants to go. It is also cheaper, as you won't have to pay code enforcement fines, additional inspection fees, or any other penalties if you don't go through the channels right the first time.

If one is in doubt as to what to do, it is best to ask a land use consultant (not to toot my own horn as the saying goes) who knows the ins and outs of the process and can guide you in the direction you need to go.

Be careful of who you ask and what you ask, as I have heard the proverbial "horror stories" of people being led astray and didn't realize it until too late. Do your due diligence in hiring a professional.



What is of interest to you, the reader...

I hope you have been enjoying reading these newsletters as much as I have in writing them. I've been trying to find information that may be of some interest to everyone.

Now that I've been doing this awhile, let me turn the tables on to you, my readers! Please let me know what may be of interest to you...things you may want to know, or hear about.

Additionally, if you have any announcements you may wish to pass along, or have a short piece to share, please pass it along and I'll be happy to include it in the newsletter.

As you know, I publish this once a month, so plan accordingly! If there is a special announcement though, I can easily slip it in the email blasts as a

separate and stand-alone item!

If you would like to see it explained on YouTube, now that I have a channel started, please let me know too!

Also note that I have a blog on my website (www.rfmlanduseconsulting.com) that I will occasionally post on. Check it out!





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***Where The
Customer Comes
First***

Publications

I hope you have enjoyed this publication of RFM Land Use Consulting's newsletter! While short in nature, I hope you have found the information useful.

It is my hope to periodically publish a newsletter to keep my clients up to date with articles relating to the planning field, as well as highlight projects I feel are of note for the community.

If there are subjects of interest in the

planning field you would like to see here, please feel free to contact me with those ideas, and I will include them in future publications.

If you know anyone wanting to subscribe to this newsletter, go to www.rfmlanduseconsulting.com, or click on the QR code below, it's free!

Thank you for reading!

Topics in future editions of the newsletter...

- The Law and Planning
- Planning theories
- Trends in planning
- Project highlights (both mine, and those in the Community)
- Cycles in the Planning Field
- Brown Act (public participation)
- Services and products
- Articles from you!
- And...?

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