# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development **MEETING DATE:** November 18, 2025

**STAFF REFERENCE:** John Mayer, Planning Division Manager **AGENDA LOCATION:** PH-2

**GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 84308 APPLIES:** No

**TITLE:** Amendment to Title 17 (Zoning Code) of the Monrovia Municipal Code to Add Section 17.12.070 and Amendment to Sections 17.04.080 and 17.52.110 Relating to Bungalow Court Development; Introduction and First Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-11

**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage and incentivize the development of bungalow courts, a traditional multi-family housing type historically common in Monrovia, by establishing objective standards and allowing Minor Exceptions for small, open-air decorative courtyard features that preserve neighborhood character and enhance shared open space.

**BACKGROUND:** Bungalow courts are an important part of Monrovia's architectural and planning history. Originating in Southern California in the early 1900s, bungalow courts consist of small cottage-style homes arranged around a shared landscaped courtyard. Many of these developments included arbors and pergolas to mark their entrances and enhance the experience of shared open spaces. This housing type provided modest multi-family housing that fit comfortably within single-family neighborhoods during Monrovia's early years.

According to Monrovia's Historic Context Statement, a preservation and land use tool used to evaluate the historic significance and integrity of the City's buildings, bungalow courts and similar courtyard developments were designed to offer "the privacy of a small dwelling in a shared semi-private landscape." These developments typically used one-story buildings oriented toward a common open space, allowing a higher density of housing while maintaining a compatible scale, generous open space, and neighborhood character.

Monrovia has several examples of early bungalow court development. One example is Harding Court (Monrovia Landmark No. 58), located on Foothill Boulevard opposite St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Built in 1920, this development consists of 15 cottages and exemplifies the bungalow court's uniform design, shared landscaping, and common amenities. Another example is Myrtle Court (Monrovia Landmark No. 79), located on North Myrtle Avenue. It features 11 units in six one-story Prairie-style duplexes arranged in a U-configuration around an earlier Craftsman single-family residence.

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in bungalow court–style development in Monrovia. In 2022, the Development Review Committee (DRC) approved a bungalow court project at 732 Mountain View Avenue, which was well received by both the City Council and the historic preservation community. This development includes four single-story cottages and two accessory dwelling units arranged around a shared central courtyard, modeled after Pasadena's 1920s Gartz Court. One of Gartz Court's character-defining features is its entrance trellis that marks the central courtyard entry.

The completion of the Mountain View Avenue project was widely recognized by the preservation community. The Monrovia Old House Preservation Group (MOHPG) formally expressed its support for bungalow court development at a City Council meeting on July 1, 2025. During their presentation, MOHPG emphasized that bungalow courts continue to provide well-designed, small-scale housing that

complements Monrovia's established neighborhoods. Their advocacy aligns with General Plan policies that promote context-sensitive infill and high-quality residential design. MOHPG also noted that the bungalow court form offers the "right amount of density," supporting a higher quality of life and more affordable housing opportunities.

During construction of the Mountain View Avenue project, a decorative arbor was installed at the courtyard entry to enhance the site's design. Subsequent review determined that while this feature reflected the design vision of the original Gartz Court, it did not meet Monrovia's zoning setback standards. Under the City's Zoning Code, all arbors, trellises, pergolas, and similar design features are classified as accessory structures. Even when these features are purely decorative and intended to enhance a site's layout, they must still comply with standard setback requirements.

This unique situation revealed the need for minor flexibility in zoning standards to accommodate important design features within bungalow court developments, especially since this housing type provides a neighborhood-compatible approach to multi-family housing and supports a high quality of life at a more attainable cost.

The City's existing Minor Exception process, outlined in Monrovia Municipal Code Section 17.52.110, allows the Development Review Committee to approve small, case-by-case adjustments to zoning or development standards when strict application of the standards would create practical difficulties or hardships. These Minor Exceptions are intended for unique circumstances, such as slight variations in setbacks, lot coverage, or other dimensional standards when the requested change remains consistent with the overall intent of the City's zoning regulations.

The proposed Bungalow Court Ordinance (Ordinance No. 2025-11) is a targeted zoning amendment that formally recognizes and incentivizes bungalow court development. It allows the Development Review Committee to grant Minor Exceptions for setback reductions when non-habitable, architecturally compatible, open-air decorative features, such as arbors, trellises, and pergolas, are proposed to enhance pedestrian entries and shared courtyard spaces.

**ANALYSIS:** Ordinance No. 2025-11 adds a new Section 17.12.070, "Incentives for Bungalow Court Development," into the Zoning Code and amends Section 17.52.110 (Minor Exceptions). Together, these amendments create a clear process for allowing minor exceptions to setback requirements for the placement of non-habitable, architecturally compatible accessory structures in existing or proposed bungalow court developments.

***Key Components of Ordinance No. 2025-11***

- **Purpose and Intent:** Encourage bungalow courts as low-density multi-family housing that preserves neighborhood character and combines individual privacy with shared open space by allowing minor flexibility in setback requirements for certain small-scale courtyard design features.

- **Definition of Bungalow Court:** Formally defines a Bungalow Court as a multi-family residential housing type consisting of detached or attached dwelling units arranged around and oriented toward a shared landscaped courtyard. Applies only to bungalow court developments and not to all residential types citywide.

- **Courtyard Accessory Structure Incentive:** Authorizes the DRC to grant Minor Exceptions to setback requirements for small, open-air accessory structures that enhance pedestrian entries or shared open spaces in bungalow court developments. Each proposal would be reviewed through the Minor Exception procedure to ensure design compatibility and public safety.

- **Size Limitation:** Establishes dimensional limits for non-habitable architecturally compatible open-air decorative structures such as arbors, trellises, and pergolas: 10 feet maximum height in front yards, 8 feet in side yards; maximum width 20 feet (front) and 4 feet (side); maximum depth 8 feet (front) and 3 feet (side). These limits maintain pedestrian scale and visual compatibility with adjacent structures.

***Planning Commission Public Hearing***
On October 15, 2025, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to review the proposed Bungalow Court Ordinance. The Commission expressed support for the Ordinance. The Commissioners asked how incorporating these new provisions into the Zoning Code might affect future development. Staff responded that the ordinance is narrowly focused, allowing the Development Review Committee to approve small, decorative, open-air features through the City's existing Minor Exception process.

Commissioners also asked where bungalow courts may be developed and whether any are currently proposed. Staff explained that bungalow courts are permitted in multi-family residential zones if a property satisfies applicable density standards. There was no public testimony on the item. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 2025-0003 by a unanimous 7–0 vote, recommending approval of Ordinance No. 2025-11 to the City Council.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:** Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines § 15305 (Class 5 – Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations), the adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-11 is categorically exempt from further environmental review. The ordinance provides limited flexibility for setback adjustments to allow decorative structures in bungalow court developments and does not result in any expansion of use or intensity of development.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no direct fiscal impact associated with the approval of this ordinance.

**OPTIONS:** The following options are presented for City Council consideration:

1. Adopt Ordinance No. 2025-11, amending Title 17 (Zoning Code) of the Monrovia Municipal Code to add Section 17.12.070 and amend Sections 17.04.080 and 17.52.110 to encourage and incentivize bungalow court development, and find that the ordinance is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Guidelines § 15305 (Class 5 – Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations); or

2. Continue the public hearing and request additional information from staff before taking action.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends Option 1s.

**COUNCIL ACTION REQUIRED:** If the City Council concurs, then following the public hearing, the appropriate action would be a motion to introduce, read by title only, and waive further reading of Ordinance No. 2025-11.

# ORDINANCE NO. 2025-11

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA, ADDING SECTION 17.12.070 TO THE MONROVIA MUNICIPAL CODE AND AMENDING MONROVIA MUNICIPAL CODE SECTIONS 17.04.080 AND 17.52.110 TO CREATE INCENTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUNGALOW COURTS, AND FINDING ADOPTION OF THE ORDINANCE TO BE CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM REVIEW UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT**

**SECTION 1.** Bungalow courts historically have been a valued historic housing type in the City, providing lower-density multi-family housing that integrates well into existing neighborhoods.

**SECTION 2.** Bungalow courts help maintain community character, offering an alternative to high-density multi-family housing while also expanding housing options for residents.

**SECTION 3.** The Monrovia General Plan encourages architectural compatibility and courtyard-style living, which are key characteristics of bungalow courts.

**SECTION 4.** The City wants to incentivize the development of bungalow courts as a housing type by allowing minor modifications to certain setback requirements as incentives to construct bungalow courts.

**SECTION 5.** City staff has initiated an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance of the Monrovia Municipal Code to incentivize the development of bungalow courts.

**SECTION 6.** On October 15, 2025, the Planning Commission of the City of Monrovia conducted a duly noticed public hearing on Ordinance No. 2025-11. At the hearing, all interested persons were given the opportunity to be heard. The Planning Commission received and considered the staff report and all the information, evidence and testimony presented in connection with this Ordinance. Following the close of the public hearing, the Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. 2025-0003 recommending approval of Ordinance No. 2025-11 to the City Council.

**SECTION 7.** On November 18, 2025, the City Council of the City of Monrovia conducted a duly noticed public hearing on Ordinance No. 2025-11. At the hearing, all interested persons were given the opportunity to be heard. The City Council received and considered the staff report, the Planning Commission's recommendation, and all the information, evidence, and testimony presented in connection with this Ordinance.

**SECTION 8.** The introductory paragraph of Section 17.04.080 of Chapter 17.04 of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Monrovia Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

"For the purpose of this title, words, phrases and terms shall have the meaning ascribed to them in this section. Also see §§ 17.08.030, 17.10.020, 17.12.005(B), 17.12.070(B) 17.14.050(B), 17.24.170(B), 17.28.020, 17.28.100, 17.38.020, 17.40.040, 17.42.030, 17.44.005(A), 17.44.010(B), 17.44.050(B), 17.44.053(B), 17.44.055(B), 17.44.057(B), 17.44.103(B), 17.44.104(B), 17.44.105(B), 17.44.170(C), 17.44.190(K), 17.44.195(B), 17.44.215(A), 17.46.020, 17.46.060(F), 17.46.100(A), 17.46.120(A), and 17.52.327(B) for additional definitions. When consistent with the context, words used in the present tense include the future; words in the singular number include the plural; and those in the plural number include the singular; the word "shall" is mandatory; the word "may" is permissive."

**SECTION 9.** Chapter 17.12 of Title 17 of the Monrovia Municipal Code is hereby amended to add a new Section 17.12.070 to read as follows:

**"§ 17.12.070 INCENTIVES FOR BUNGALOW COURT DEVELOPMENT.**

(A) *Purpose*. The purpose of this section is to encourage the development of Bungalow Courts, as defined herein, as a form of low-density, multi-family housing that preserves neighborhood character and combines individual privacy with shared open space. This section provides for minor modifications to certain development standards of this Title as incentives to construct bungalow courts, including allowing non-habitable, architecturally compatible, open-air landscape decorative structures such as arbors, trellises, and pergolas that enhance pedestrian entries and shared courtyard spaces.

(B) *Definition*. For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

***BUNGALOW COURT***. A form of multi-family residential housing permitted in any zone that allows multifamily dwellings, consisting of detached or attached dwelling units, arranged around, and oriented toward, a shared landscaped courtyard.

(C) *Committee Exceptions*. To incentivize the development of a Bungalow Court, the Committee may grant a minor exception pursuant to § 17.52.110(A)(2)(f) for a non-habitable, architecturally compatible, open-air (unenclosed) accessory structure, such as an arbor, trellis, pergola or similar element, that enhances the design and usability of pedestrian entries or shared courtyard spaces in a Bungalow Court. Non-habitable open-air accessory structures shall adhere to the following standards:

(1) Height: The vertical distance from the lowest finished grade at a post, or similar support element, to the highest point of the structure shall not exceed ten (10) feet in overall height when located in the front yard and eight (8) feet in overall height when located in a side yard.

(2) Width and Depth:

(a) Maximum width (measured as overall coverage including projecting beams or rafters): Twenty (20) feet when located in the front yard or four (4) feet when located in a side yard.

(b) Maximum depth: Eight (8) feet when located in the front yard or three (3) feet when located in a side yard.

(3) Placement:

(a) Open-air non-habitable accessory structures may be located in front or side yard setbacks of a Bungalow Court, including at the property line.

(b) No more than one non-habitable accessory structure may be located along each street or courtyard frontage of a Bungalow Court."

**SECTION 10.** Section 17.52.110 of Chapter 17.52 of Title 17 of the Monrovia Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows (text to be added is underlined):

**"§ 17.52.110 MINOR EXCEPTIONS.**

(A) In appropriate cases the Committee shall have the power to grant minor exceptions to the development standards of this title in those cases where such minor exceptions are warranted by practical difficulties, unnecessary hardships or results that may be inconsistent with the general intent of the code. The Committee shall have the power to grant the following deviations from the provisions of this title:

(1) An increase of up to 10% in floor area ratio over the maximum allowed;

(2) A reduction in setbacks as follows:

(a) Front setback: 15% maximum reduction;

(b) Side setback: two feet maximum reduction, or for additions in alignment with an existing structure, a minimum three feet from the property line;

(c) Rear setback: 20% maximum reduction;

(d) Between buildings: 20% maximum reduction, with the exception of single-family developed lots that may be considered at a 30% maximum reduction;

(e) In the Residential Foothill Zone for lots with graded pads: a 20% maximum reduction for all setbacks;

(f) <u>Front or side setback for open-air non-habitable accessory structures: Setback reductions for non-habitable, architecturally compatible, open-air (unenclosed) accessory structures (such as arbors, trellises, pergolas, or similar elements) in Bungalow Courts, as provided in § 17.12.070(C).</u>

(3) Exceptions pertaining to swimming pools;

(4) Allow an addition to a residential structure in any residential zone to exceed the maximum building height for the structure to match the height of the original house if the home is architecturally or historically significant.

(5) Up to 5% reduction of the minimum floor area for dwelling units;

(6) Exceptions pertaining to fences, hedges and walls;

(7) Allowance of the use of common recreation space as a substitute for private recreation space;

(8) Area, width and setback reductions up to 10% of the amount prescribed for service stations;

(9) Deviations pertaining to parking requirements with the following exceptions:

(a) Parking reductions for existing single-family and existing multiple-family residential units, except for the elimination of all parking;

(b) Over a 10% reduction in parking for nonresidential uses;

(10) Deviations pertaining to the sign regulations.

(B) Applications for minor exceptions shall be made to the Committee in writing. The application shall contain such information as is requested by the Director.

(C) Notice of the public hearing shall be mailed or delivered at least ten days prior to the hearing to all owners of real property, as shown on the latest equalized assessment roll, within 100 feet of the real property that is the subject of the hearing. In lieu of utilizing the assessment roll, the local agency may utilize records of the County Assessor or Tax Collector which contain more recent information than the assessment roll."

**SECTION 11**. This Ordinance is consistent with the Policies 9.3 and 9.4 of the Monrovia General Plan Land Use Element, which encourage the City to continue to monitor residential development standards to maintain compatibility with existing development, and to continue to refine design guidelines for new multi-family development, respectively.

**SECTION 12.** The adoption of this Ordinance is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15305 (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations) because this Ordinance permits minor modifications to existing development standards for non-habitable, architecturally compatible, open-air decorative accessory structures in the courtyards of bungalow courts, and does not result in any changes in land use or density.

**SECTION 13**. The custodian of records for all materials that constitute the record of the proceedings upon which this decision is based is the City Clerk. Those documents

are available for public review in the Office of the City Clerk located at 415 South Ivy Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016.

**SECTION 14**. Severability. If any section, subsection, subdivision, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this ordinance, or the application thereof to any person or place, is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have adopted this ordinance, and each and every section, subsection, subdivision, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, subdivisions, sentences, clauses, phrases, or portions thereof be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

**SECTION 15**. The City Clerk shall certify to the passage of this Ordinance and shall cause same to be published pursuant to state law within fifteen (15) days after its passage, and this Ordinance shall become effective thirty (30) days after its passage.

**INTRODUCED** this 18th day of November, 2025.

**PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED** this 2nd day of December, 2025.

Becky A. Shevlin, Mayor
City of Monrovia

**ATTEST:**

Alice D. Atkins, MMC, City Clerk
City of Monrovia

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

Craig A. Steele, City Attorney
City of Monrovia

# PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 2025-0003

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MONROVIA, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF ORDINANCE NO. 2025-11 ADDING SECTION 17.12.070 TO THE MONROVIA MUNICIPAL CODE AND AMENDING SECTIONS 17.04.080 AND 17.52.110 OF THE MONROVIA MUNICIPAL CODE TO CREATE INCENTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUNGALOW COURTS, AND FINDING THE ADOPTION OF THE ORDINANCE TO BE CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT FROM REVIEW UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT**

## RECITALS

(i) Bungalow courts historically have been a valued historic housing type in the City, providing lower-density multi-family housing that integrates well into existing neighborhoods.

(ii) Bungalow courts help maintain community character, offering an alternative to high-density multi-family housing while also expanding housing options for residents.

(iii) The Monrovia General Plan encourages architectural compatibility and courtyard-style living, which are key characteristics of bungalow courts.

(iv) The City wants to incentivize the development of bungalow courts as a housing type by allowing minor modifications to certain setback requirements as incentives to construct bungalow courts.

(v) City staff has initiated an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance of the Monrovia Municipal Code to incentivize the development of bungalow courts.

(vi) On October 15, 2025, the Planning Commission of the City of Monrovia conducted a duly noticed public hearing on Ordinance No. 2025-11. At the hearing, all interested persons were given the opportunity to be heard. The Planning Commission received and considered the staff report and all the information, evidence and testimony presented in connection with this Ordinance.

(vii) Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, City staff concluded, and the Planning Commission concurs, that Ordinance No. 2025-11 is categorically exempt from further environmental review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15305 (Class 5 – Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations) because it allows minor modifications to existing setback standards for small, non-habitable, open-air decorative features and does not result in changes in land use or density.

(viii) The custodian of records for all materials that constitute the record of the proceedings upon which this decision is based is the Planning Division Manager. Those documents are available for public review in the Planning Division located at 415 South Ivy Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016.

(ix) All legal prerequisites to the adoption of this Resolution have occurred.

**RESOLUTION**

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Planning Commission of the City of Monrovia hereby finds, determines and resolves as follows:

1. The Planning Commission finds that all of the facts set forth in the Recitals of this Resolution are true and correct.

2. Adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-11 is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15305 (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations).

3. The proposed ordinance is consistent with the goals and policies of the Monrovia General Plan Land Use Element, which encourage the City to continue to monitor residential development standards to maintain compatibility with existing development, and to continue to refine design guidelines for new multi-family development, respectively.

4. Ordinance No. 2025-11 will not adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare. It provides a clear, limited process for allowing minor modifications to certain setback requirements for small, decorative courtyard features in bungalow court developments through the City's existing Minor Exception process.

5. Based upon the findings and conclusions set forth above, the Planning Commission hereby recommends adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-11 to the City Council. The Ordinance is attached hereto as "Exhibit A" and incorporated herein by this reference.

6. The Secretary of the Planning Commission shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution.

**PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED** this 15th day of October, 2025.

Cheryl Rose, Acting Chair

Jhaila R. Brown, Chair
Monrovia Planning Commission

Cheryl Rose, Acting Chair FOR

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Sheri Bermejo, Secretary
Monrovia Planning Commission

Chelsea Straus, Assistant City Attorney
City of Monrovia