



CITY OF CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA CITY COUNCIL Staff Report

July 9, 2024
ORDERS OF BUSINESS

TO:	Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
SUBMITTED BY:	Emily Garay, Administrative Analyst
APPROVED BY:	Chip Rerig, City Administrator
SUBJECT:	Receive a presentation on the exploration of street addresses, to be discussed, and provide staff with direction

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a presentation on the exploration of assigning street addresses in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea. Consider and provide direction on the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation to move forward with the assignment of street addresses in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea and to create an implementation plan and return to City Council no later than September 2024.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:

On October 4, 2022, the City Council received a presentation from staff regarding preliminary research and historical context on street addresses. The research included consideration by Council and residents in the past and the presentation of a "white paper" (**Attachment 1**). The focus was on the City's intention to not implement door-to-door mail delivery and maintain the downtown post office operational for the community. Staff continued research into street addresses with a recognition and emphasis on the topics of exploring street addresses and at-home/door-to-door mail delivery as two separate issues, with the intention of only exploring implementation of street addresses, not at-home/door-to-door mail delivery. A critical element identified by staff was the need for an official response from the USPS on whether implementing a street address system would compel mail delivery and/or result in the closure of the downtown post office.

At Council's direction, staff diligently pursued further research into the process and requirements of implementing a street address system. With efforts including:

- Addressing questions posed by City Council members and community members.
- Gaining a thorough understanding of USPS processes and policies.
- Establishing more consistent communication lines with USPS representatives.
- Engaging with the USPS Address Management System Manager assigned to our district, (CA-Dist. 3), for guidance and clarification of the process.

Ad Hoc Committee

On November 7, 2023, the Mayor formed an Ad Hoc Committee dedicated to researching the street address system exploration, requirements, and implementation. Since its formation, the Ad Hoc Committee

aligned its focus and research on addressing key questions posed by Councilmembers and the community regarding street address implementation.

Questions Researched

Staff and the Ad Hoc Committee aligned its research to answering the following questions:

1. Will street address implementation trigger at-home mail delivery?
2. Can a hybrid system be implemented?
3. Can the City definitively say the downtown post office will not close?
4. Does CA Fire Code compliance require the City to have street addresses?
5. How does street address implementation enhance public safety for Carmel-by-the-Sea?

1. Will street address implementation trigger at-home mail delivery?

No, street address implementation in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea will not trigger at-home mail delivery.

Based on research and direct engagement with the US Postal Service (USPS), staff and the Ad Hoc Committee determined that implementing a street address system will not trigger at-home mail delivery. This conclusion was reached after reviewing the USPS Policies and Operations Manual (**Attachment 2**), consulting with the USPS Growth Manager and Address Management Systems Manager, and direct correspondence between Councilmember Ferlito and the USPS (**Attachment 3**).

In the correspondence between Councilmember Ferlito and the USPS Address Management Systems Manager, the USPS replied, “local post office will not close; mail delivery system will remain as is...[and] yes, the USPS is the authority for street address systems. Other entities and mailers use our mailing products to determine valid addresses.” Staff research and conversations with the Address Systems Manager clarified that while the USPS will not take any proactive action to relay any new address systems to third parties or companies, the USPS database is one the most widely used databases from which other parties, institutions, and companies gather public address information from.

2. Can a hybrid system be implemented? (similar to other cities and towns with addresses and PO Box mail delivery)

Yes, a hybrid system can be implemented. The USPS requirements for a street address system can be reviewed in **Attachment 4**.

A street address system implementation would result in a hybrid model for Carmel-by-the-Sea; community members would still use their PO Boxes for mail delivery (“centralized mail delivery” at the downtown post office) while having assigned street addresses, without at-home mail delivery. This hybrid system is used in other cities and towns such as Lake Arrowhead, La Granada, and San Juan Bautista.

3. Can the City definitively say the downtown post office will not close?

No, the City cannot definitively state or guarantee that the downtown Post Office will never close.

Staff research and the Ad Hoc Committee’s discussions with USPS officials, along with the existing infrastructure at the downtown post office, indicate a positive outlook for its continued operation.

4. Does California Fire Code compliance require the City to have street addresses?

Yes, in order to be in compliance under the California Fire Code, the City shall have street addresses and street address numbers with visible house numbers/building numbers, visible from the street.

As a matter of public safety, the California Fire Code provides standards to protect and promote public and community safety. Research and discussions among staff from multiple departments including the Director

of Public Safety/Police Chief Tomasi, Fire Chief Miller, Building Official Laurie, and City Attorney Pierik, have concluded that street addresses and address identification numbers in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea are required for compliance under the California Fire Code and as a significant tool for public safety.

The CA Fire Code section on Address Identification (Section 505.1) reads (emphasis added): *New and existing buildings shall be provided with approved address identification. The address identification shall be legible and placed in a position that is visible from the street or road fronting the property.* Address identification characters shall contrast with their background. Address numbers shall be Arabic numbers or alphabetical letters. Numbers shall not be spelled out. Each character shall be not less than 4 inches (102 mm) high with a minimum stroke width of 1/2 inch (12.7 mm). *Where required by the fire code official, address identification shall be provided in additional approved locations to facilitate emergency response.* Where access is by means of a private road and the building cannot be viewed from the public way, a monument, pole or other sign or means shall be used to identify the structure. *Address identification shall be maintained.*

In reviewing the possibility of exceptions or amendments to the California Fire Code, the City Attorney and Director of Planning and Building concluded that a city, in its adoption of the California Fire Code into its Building Code, may amend the Fire Code regulations, but those amendments may only, “establish more restrictive building standards, including, but not limited to, green building standards, reasonably necessary because of local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions.” Building and Fire Code Standards, as identified above in Section 505.1, describe the base requirements, including buildings being provided with approved address identification, numbers legible and visible from the street, with specific size and visibility requirements to facilitate emergency response and that address identification shall be maintained. A description of Parcel location relative to the nearest cross-street intersection that is in use today would likely be considered to be less restrictive than the Fire Code requirements for street addresses. For more information on the California Fire Code and Building Code, see **Attachment 5**.

5. How is the assignment of street addresses essential for public safety in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea?

Staff, the Ad Hoc Committee, Chief Tomasi, and Fire Chief Miller discussed the effects, challenges, workarounds, and training that goes into training Fire and Police staff for emergency responses in the City. While the Police, Ambulance, and Fire departments make concerted efforts to train emergency response personnel to work within the current non-confirming descriptive address system to provide the highest level of safety service to the community, some emergency personnel such as AMR ambulance services, who respond to 15-20% of medical emergencies in the City, are not as familiar with the current system and may cause delays in response times to provide essential aid. In an emergency situation in which CAL Fire or FEMA personnel may be a part of the response team, the current descriptive system could pose challenging for quick and essential response times.

PD Chief Tomasi explained,

Monterey Fire, Cal Fire, AMR, and Monterey County OES responses are handled by Monterey County Dispatchers. Only, the Fire Dispatcher has the mapping system for the City, which is how this group would respond to a call in our City.

Monterey Fire (our Fire Department) has a very good understanding of our mapping system to locate our addresses because of the volume and regularity of call responses. The other groups are more infrequent and therefore don't have a full grasp of our addressing system. This is where we should be most concerned. A slow response by AMR, who responds to about 15-20% of our medical emergencies is an important concern and should be highlighted.

Another major concern is our County Emergency Notification System, an address-based notification system. We can only send alerts by zip code where other agencies can be more neighborhood specific. Right now, every time we send an alert message it goes to everyone in 93921. Consider the challenges we have faced for Missing Adults, or major incident notifications, where we cannot identify specific areas and have to notify everyone in 93921.

Other Considerations:

Residents and community members have communicated to Councilmembers and staff various hindrances and inconveniences as a result of not having a verifiable physical street address. Extended wait times for financial institution verification processes, lost or undeliverable packages, utilities set-up delays, etc. can affect everyday life and cause inconveniences but certain inconveniences may rise to a public health and safety issue when they fall in the realm of prescribed medication delivery or delivery of essential medical equipment.

Staff's presentation to City Council will include an explanation of its research and recommendation regarding California's Fire Code and Building Code as it relates to street addresses, the research and replies from the USPS Address Management Systems Manager, how it enhances public safety, and seek direction from City Council on whether to move forward with street addresses implementation by initiating and engaging in the established process with the local USPS Growth Manager or whether to conclude its research and maintain the status quo of not having a street address system in the City. If staff is directed to move forward, staff will return to Council with a road map and timeline for community engagement and outreach for the process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

On October 4, 2022, Council gave direction to staff to continue to do research on the topic and confirm if implementing a street address system will require mail delivery service.

On November 7, 2023, Council received a presentation on staff's research and the Ad Hoc Committee for street address exploration was formed.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1) Street Addresses White Paper

Attachment 2) Chapter 63 Sections 631.1-643.1 USPS Postal Operations Manual (POM)

Attachment 3) USPS Correspondence

Attachment 4) USPS Addressing Conventions

Attachment 5) Carmel-by-the-Sea Mail - Fwd_ CA building codes

Attachment 6) Questions from City Council and Community Members