

# River Improvement Overlay (RIO) District

Spring 2014

## What is the River Improvement Overlay (RIO) District?

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The RIO is a proposed supplemental use district that will require new projects, within an established RIO district, to comply with the RIO design standards.

## Are there any RIO districts yet?

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The first RIO is proposed for the Los Angeles River. That ordinance is referred to as the LA-RIO.

## How did the RIO come about?

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During the development of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) in 2006 and 2007 there was interest in acknowledging and celebrating the unique potential of neighborhoods abutting the Los Angeles River (River). Discussions about this led to the idea of forming a district and establishing design standards to enhance the special qualities of river adjacent communities. Although the RIO was initially conceived for the River, communities adjacent to the River's tributaries such as Pacoima Wash, Tujunga Wash, and Arroyo Seco asked that they too have a RIO district. This led to the concept of developing a standardized RIO district that could be used by any waterway.

## How could a river community get their own RIO?

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The RIO includes procedures for a river adjacent community to request a RIO. The key questions to determine would be the extent of the specific RIO's boundaries and whether any additional standards (beyond the standards in the RIO) should be added.

## What is the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan?

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The Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) was adopted in May 2007 and establishes a vision for the 32 miles of the Los Angeles River (River) that are within the City of Los Angeles. The River starts in Canoga Park and continues for 51 miles to the Long Beach Harbor. The LARRMP envisions the River as a 32 mile linear park with walking and bicycling paths and community open space and recreational opportunities. The LARRMP also acknowledged the value in facilitating bicycle and pedestrian connections between river adjacent communities and the River.

## How does the RIO impact me if my property is in a RIO district?

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The standards of the RIO will only impact you if, and when, you elect to redevelop your property or undergo a major remodel (> 50% of building value) that includes exterior work. If your work is defined as a "project" then you will need to obtain an Administrative Clearance from the Los Angeles Department of City Planning. The Administrative Clearance is meant to be a quick and routine process whereby your project's drawings would be reviewed for compliance with the landscaping and other design standards defined in the RIO.

## [Is there a fee for this Administrative Clearance?](#)

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Yes, the fee is currently expected to range between \$199 and \$745. The fee is based upon the scale and scope of your project and is meant to capture the time for staff to review the project's compliance with the applicable RIO standards.

## [Tell me more about the RIO's landscaping requirements.](#)

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The RIO's landscaping requirements are intended to only affect projects that are installing new landscaping. Existing landscaping does not have to be removed. While the planting of native plants is certainly encouraged the RIO permits a broad range of plants that are suitable to a Mediterranean climate. The full list of these plants can be found at [watershedhealth.org](http://watershedhealth.org).

## [If my project is immediately adjacent to the River do I have to provide a gate for the public?](#)

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Access through a gate on your property to the River, or any waterway, may be controlled and limited to residents, employees and/or visitors of the project. A business on the River may elect to have their gate open during business hours for visitors and employees; whereas, a single-family home owner would most likely keep the gate locked for the exclusive use of residents.

## [Does the RIO restrict what I can build?](#)

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The RIO does not impose any limits on the size, use, height and/or setbacks of a building beyond what is restricted by the prevailing zoning and building codes.

## [Does the RIO restrict my parking?](#)

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The RIO does not impose any restrictions on the amount of parking spaces that a project provides. The RIO does require that any parking adjacent to the River or neighboring streets be screened from view.

## [What is the timeline and process for adopting the RIO?](#)

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The RIO and the LA-RIO ordinances are expected to be considered by the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee in Spring 2014. Once the ordinances are approved by PLUM they will be forwarded to the full City Council for adoption and then the Mayor for his signature.

## [The RIO refers to River Design Guidelines, can you explain?](#)

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The RIO establishes a process for the City Planning Commission (Commission) to adopt River Design Guidelines. The process for developing and adopting the River Design Guidelines would occur after the RIO and LA-RIO are adopted. While there is a draft of the River Design Guidelines additional discussion with the community is needed before the Guidelines can be finalized and presented to the Commission. The River Design Guidelines are meant to complement the recently adopted Citywide Design Guidelines. The River Guidelines would mirror the format of the Citywide Guidelines but would focus on the portion of the project that is oriented to the waterway. Only projects requesting discretionary action from the City Planning Department would be subject to the Guidelines.