



# PLANNING

LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING | QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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## CITY COUNCIL APPROVES \$1B CROSSROADS HOLLYWOOD PROJECT

In January, the City Council cleared the path for the Harridge Development Group to construct the \$1 billion Crossroads Hollywood project. Spanning across 8-acres, the project will replace surface parking and a number of existing one- and two-story buildings with commercial, residential, and entertainment uses.

The project site will include eight new buildings — the tallest of which will reach 31 stories. Several of the buildings will be mixed-use residential, ranging from studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. One hundred and five of the overall 950 units will be reserved for Very Low Income households earning \$48,450 per year or less for a household of four. Additionally, the 1.4 million-square-foot complex will feature a 308-room hotel and 190,000 square feet of commercial space with retail storefronts and restaurants.

The project incorporates design features that will improve the pedestrian experience. A signature feature of the project is its paseo, which extends diagonally from Sunset Boulevard at the frontage of Crossroads of the World to the corner of Selma and Highland Avenues. The proposed project will result in approximately 166,375 square feet of open space — 23,500 of which is

located in the paseo for members of the public to gather and socialize.

The Harridge Development Group worked with City officials to retain a number of existing buildings onsite and to protect the historically designated Crossroads of the World shopping plaza, Bullinger Building, and *Hollywood Reporter* Building, by locating the majority of the allowable density and height away from these sites. Designed by local architect Robert V. Derrah, the Crossroads of the World complex is one of Los Angeles's most recognizable properties. It was built in 1936 to serve as an outdoor mall, and has since been associated with international celebrities and Hollywood's evolution throughout the 20th century.

In addition to preserving and revitalizing part of Los Angeles's history, the project also includes a number of features to ensure its environmental sustainability into the future. It is one of just 16 development projects across the State of California to proceed under the Jobs and Economic Improvement through Environmental Leadership Act of 2011 (AB 900), and it received certification as an *Environmental Leadership Development Project* for its climate adaptive strategies.

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE VINCENT BERTONI



As planners, we shape the built environment — the spaces that we, as people, create to provide the setting for human activity. We approach this assignment with the utmost sensitivity to our natural environment, recognizing the competing demands on our resources and the realities of climate change.

As a Department, we are advancing work programs that are improving the sustainability and resiliency of Los Angeles. Most recently, we initiated a wildlife pilot study that is examining ways we can improve habitat preservation in some of our hillside areas.

Additionally, we are updating our local environmental thresholds to encourage smarter development in proximity to high-quality transit to enable Angelenos to have better access to housing and live closer to jobs and services. This approach to planning has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by creating communities where people can live close to jobs, schools, shopping, and other destinations — providing opportunities for people to choose alternative modes of transportation rather than driving.

In Los Angeles, we see planning for the environment and the economy as two sides of the same coin — an opportunity for us to ensure that we are incorporating the latest climate adaptive strategies to achieve better economic results for our communities and all who live, work, and visit our City.

# ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT

The Department established an Environmental Policy Unit in the fall of 2018 to provide citywide guidance on environmental regulations. The Unit is responsible for updating existing policies and practices to comply with state and local changes to environmental law.

Since its inception, the Unit has undertaken revisions to the Department's environmental thresholds, as outlined under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). These thresholds determine a proposed project's potential effects on the environment, and are updated periodically at the state and local level to stay current with environmental case law and CEQA.

A major portion of the Unit's work is also focused on improving coordination between City departments and standardizing environmental documents to ensure greater compliance and consistency. These changes assist City staff throughout the project review process — achieving greater transparency and improved analysis as a result of these new efficiencies.

## Key Highlights



### Convening Staff Trainings

The Unit is providing training to better acquaint new Department staff to CEQA and the corresponding materials needed for the purposes of evaluating projects.



### Updating Citywide Forms and Templates

The Unit is revising templates for project review to reflect recent revisions to environmental rules and procedures for consistency.



### Developing an Environmental Review Guide

The Unit is formulating an internal guide to assist the Department in evaluating project applications in accordance with CEQA.

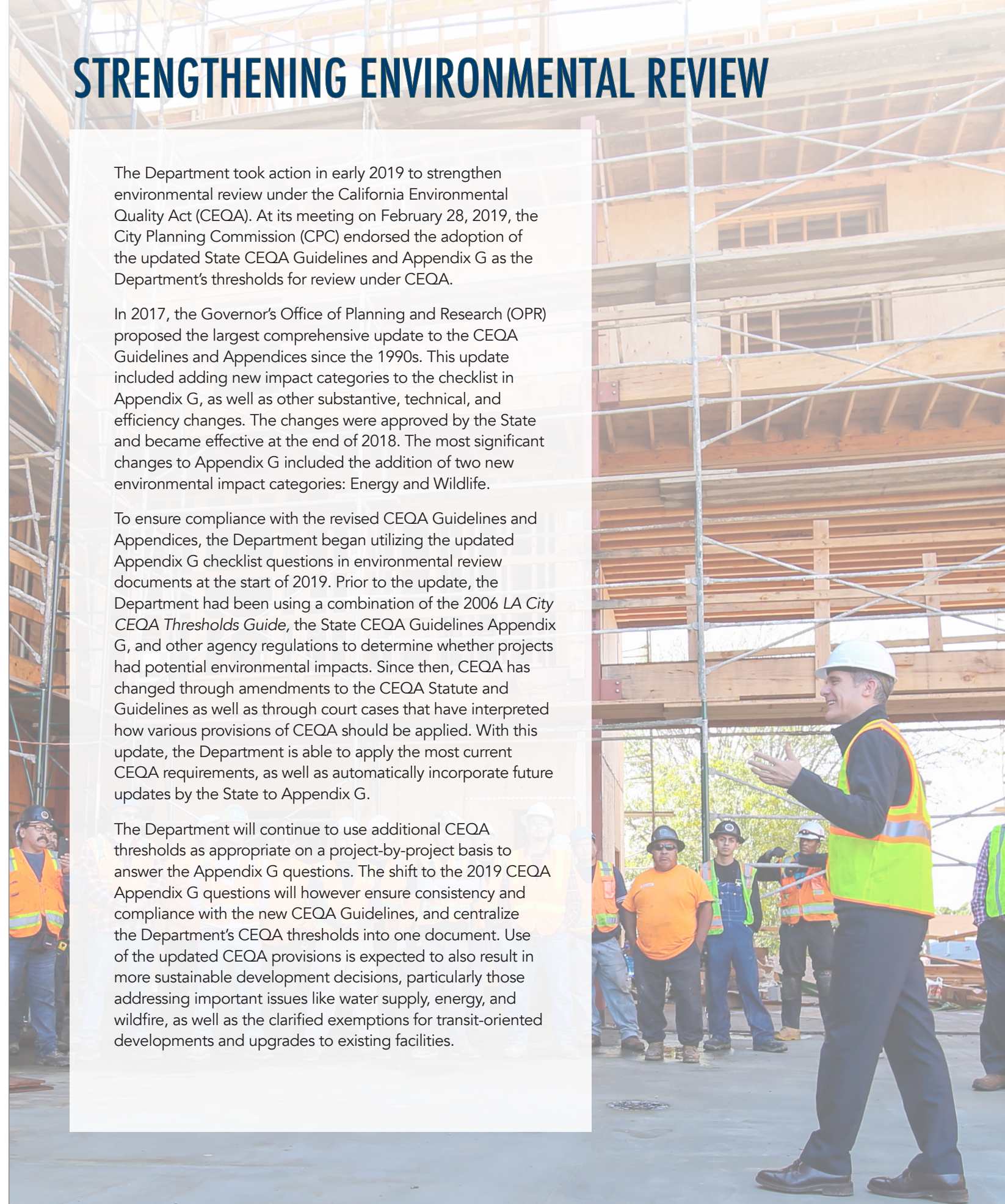
# STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Department took action in early 2019 to strengthen environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). At its meeting on February 28, 2019, the City Planning Commission (CPC) endorsed the adoption of the updated State CEQA Guidelines and Appendix G as the Department's thresholds for review under CEQA.

In 2017, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) proposed the largest comprehensive update to the CEQA Guidelines and Appendices since the 1990s. This update included adding new impact categories to the checklist in Appendix G, as well as other substantive, technical, and efficiency changes. The changes were approved by the State and became effective at the end of 2018. The most significant changes to Appendix G included the addition of two new environmental impact categories: Energy and Wildlife.

To ensure compliance with the revised CEQA Guidelines and Appendices, the Department began utilizing the updated Appendix G checklist questions in environmental review documents at the start of 2019. Prior to the update, the Department had been using a combination of the 2006 *LA City CEQA Thresholds Guide*, the State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, and other agency regulations to determine whether projects had potential environmental impacts. Since then, CEQA has changed through amendments to the CEQA Statute and Guidelines as well as through court cases that have interpreted how various provisions of CEQA should be applied. With this update, the Department is able to apply the most current CEQA requirements, as well as automatically incorporate future updates by the State to Appendix G.

The Department will continue to use additional CEQA thresholds as appropriate on a project-by-project basis to answer the Appendix G questions. The shift to the 2019 CEQA Appendix G questions will however ensure consistency and compliance with the new CEQA Guidelines, and centralize the Department's CEQA thresholds into one document. Use of the updated CEQA provisions is expected to also result in more sustainable development decisions, particularly those addressing important issues like water supply, energy, and wildfire, as well as the clarified exemptions for transit-oriented developments and upgrades to existing facilities.



# PROTECTING AND RESTORING LOS ANGELES'S WILDLIFE

The Department has initiated a wildlife study to examine potential development regulations in the hillside neighborhoods of the Santa Monica Mountains. At the request of Councilmember Paul Koretz, the Department is conducting a pilot study for the purposes of testing out new development standards that could inform future citywide policies.

The pilot area consists primarily of low density residential homes and large undeveloped public open spaces. Most of the land use is zoned for varying types of single-family residential uses — ranging from smaller suburban residential lots to larger estates.

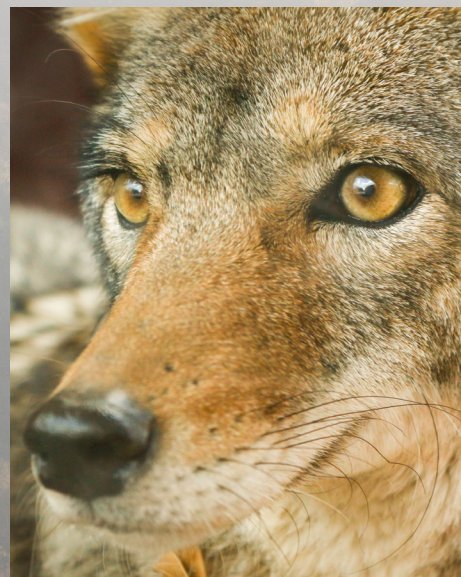
In November 2018, the Department hosted an open house to share initial concepts and receive public feedback. More than 100 people turned out to learn about some of the concepts under consideration. Since then, Department staff have been meeting with technical experts, as well as community and neighborhood groups to conduct mapping analysis of the area.

The primary goal of the pilot study is to provide guidance on how the City can manage and conserve its biological resources. The study will also assist the Department in identifying other wildlife habitats. Establishing better management tools and further understanding wildlife habitats will assist the City in implementing existing environmental efforts geared toward sustainability — including, the protection of Los Angeles's natural resources and habitat connectivity.

The pilot study builds on many of the City's larger environmental efforts. Both the Mayor's *Sustainable City pLAn* and the *Resilient Los Angeles Plan* call for setting up measures to prepare for events attributable to climate change. These concurrent efforts underscore the importance of sustainability for Los Angeles's long-term health and enjoyment.

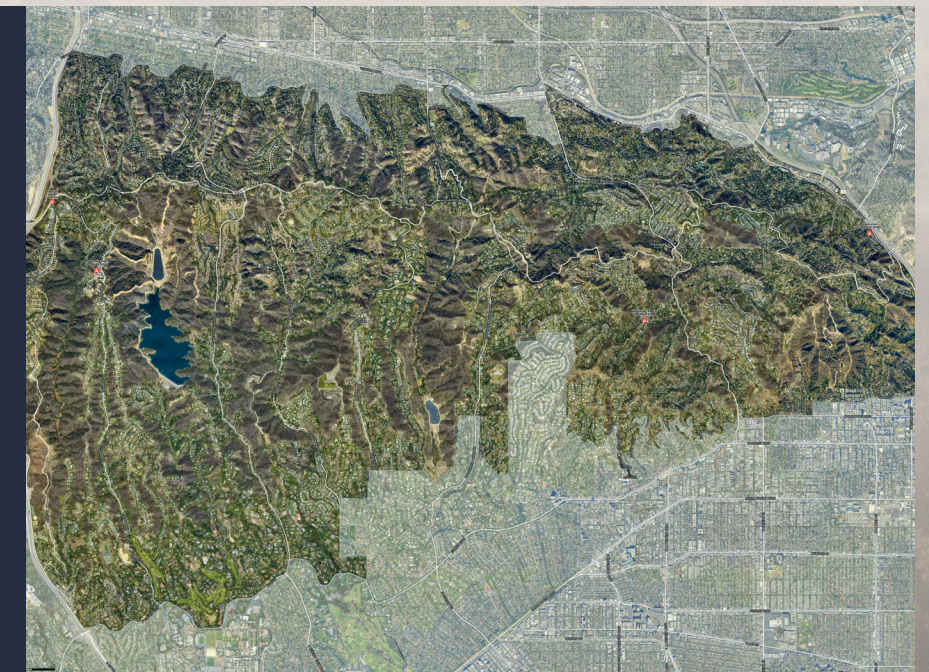


Gardens By Gabriel Inc.



## STUDY AREA: WILDLIFE PILOT

The 24,000 acres of land located within the pilot study area includes single-family homes surrounded by publicly accessible open space. The biology and biodiversity reflect flora that is native to the Mediterranean-type climate along the Pacific Coast of North America. It is home to a number of native species of animals including, but not limited to, the mule deer, coyote, and bobcat.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS

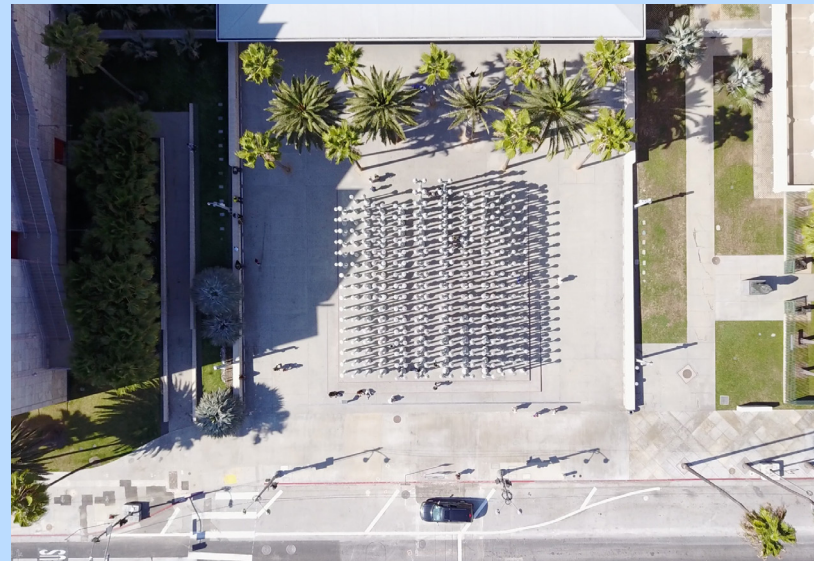
On February 28, the City Planning Commission (CPC) recommended approval of the Department's revised thresholds for evaluating transportation-related impacts of a project on the environment. These updated transportation thresholds aim to improve mobility options citywide — informing transportation alternatives and a broader range of potential mitigation measures for future development projects.

These changes are in response to State legislation, which requires cities across California to use an updated framework for CEQA analysis of transportation impacts known as VMT — Vehicle Miles Traveled. Several cities have already made the shift including Pasadena, San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland.

By adopting the VMT framework, the Department will be able to account for regional environmental impacts when reviewing development applications — including, the total number of cars on the road, the distances they travel, and their associated impacts on the transportation system.

To manage concerns related to vehicular delay, the Department is also updating mitigation measures for projects that are subject to environmental review under State law. These transportation mitigation measures range from employer-sponsored rideshare programs to infrastructure improvements that are intended to make walking easier, safer, and more accessible for pedestrians as well as to increase transportation opportunities.

The City Council will receive an update from the Department on the new framework later this spring. To educate community members on the proposed changes, the Department will be facilitating citywide workshops in the near future.



## PLANNING 101 TRAINING SERIES

### Planning for the Environment

In May, the Department will be initiating the next installment of *Planning 101* trainings, in partnership with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. There will be seven trainings held across Los Angeles, along with a webinar.

This year's topic will be environmental review and the types of policies and regulations that guide project and policy planning considerations at the city level. Participants will also be introduced to the role of the City and its residents in planning for the environment.

Planning staff will begin with an overview of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and how statewide regulations inform the types of environmental review for proposed projects and policies. They will then share updates on citywide efforts underway that relate to the environment — ranging from hillside construction regulations to new wildlife protections.

*Planning 101* is an educational initiative spearheaded by the Department. It was initiated in 2017 in response to a growing desire from the public to learn more about the planning process. Since its inception, 23 trainings were attended by nearly 1,200 community members, with a number of these individuals representing neighborhood councils and small business owners.



**THURSDAY, MAY 2**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Los Angeles City College,  
Student Union Multipurpose Room B  
855 N. Vermont Avenue

**MONDAY, MAY 6**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Department of Water & Power  
Crenshaw Customer Service Center  
4030 Crenshaw Boulevard

**TUESDAY, MAY 7**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Canoga Park Senior Citizens Center  
7326 Jordan Avenue

**MONDAY, MAY 13**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Ramona Hall Community Center  
4580 N. Figueroa Street

**MONDAY, MAY 20**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Henry Medina Parking Enforcement Facility  
11214 W. Exposition Boulevard

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 22**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Pacoima City Hall  
13520 Van Nuys Boulevard

**THURSDAY, MAY 23**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Banning Landings Community Center  
100 E. Water Street

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 29**

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Webinar  
RSVP: [bit.ly/p101env](http://bit.ly/p101env)

RSVP at <http://bit.ly/P101Env> | For any questions, email [planning.liaison@lacity.org](mailto:planning.liaison@lacity.org)

STAFF  
PROFILERUBINA  
GHAZARIAN

Rubina Ghazarian is a City Planner in the Citywide Policy Unit overseeing transportation planning. She implements the strategies of the Mobility Plan 2035 — the policy document that sets the vision for how the City will accommodate all users and modes of travel.

Most recently, Rubina worked on updating the City's transportation thresholds and analysis procedures, which are used by Department staff to determine a proposed project or plan's impacts on its surrounding environment. This effort more closely aligns local procedures with those of the State in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.

Rubina previously worked as a mobility planner at the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and LA Metro where she planned complete streets corridor projects and implemented the Los Angeles Bike Share program in the Downtown Los Angeles and Venice neighborhoods.

Rubina is a native Angeleno who is passionate about creating livable and inclusive communities. She has a Masters of Planning from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Environmental Studies from UC San Diego.

## CITY PLANNING UPDATES

On February 11, **Records Management** relocated to Figueroa Plaza at 221 N. Figueroa Street to allow project applicants to more easily review case files while visiting the public counter at the Metro/ Downtown Development Services Center.

On March 19, the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee approved a resolution and ordinance to transfer the land use authority from the former **Community Redevelopment Agency** to the City of Los Angeles — eliminating the need for projects located within redevelopment plan areas to acquire multiple sign-offs. The transfer of land use authority is pending final action by the City Council.

On March 27, the City Council adopted a motion instructing the Department to prepare a technical amendment to the City's existing **emergency shelter** standards. The amendments will align the City's Municipal Code with the State Government Code to ensure that local regulations do not conflict with future changes to State law.

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## DEVELOPMENT SERVICES CENTERS

METRO  
PUBLIC COUNTER

201 N. Figueroa St., 4th Fl  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 482-7077

VALLEY  
PUBLIC COUNTER

6262 Van Nuys Blvd., 2nd Fl  
Los Angeles, CA 91401  
(818) 374-5050

WEST LOS ANGELES  
PUBLIC COUNTER

1828 Sawtelle Blvd., 2nd Fl  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
(310) 231-2901

## OUR MISSION

To create and implement plans, policies and programs that realize a vision of Los Angeles as a collection of healthy and sustainable neighborhoods, each with a distinct sense of place, based on a foundation of mobility, economic vitality and improved quality of life for all residents.

Designed by the Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning  
Graphics Services Section

As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability and, upon request, will provide reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to its programs, services and activities.

This newsletter is published quarterly by the External Affairs Unit of the Los Angeles Department of City Planning. For questions, comments or reprint requests, please contact Agnes Sibal-von Debschitz at Agnes.Sibal@lacity.org | (213) 978-1015.