

FACT SHEET

Processes and Procedures

Summary

The Processes and Procedures Ordinance is the initial part of a larger effort to comprehensively revise the City's Zoning Code to make it more responsive and accessible to the public. The proposed Ordinance streamlines and reorganizes the rules that govern the steps involved in reviewing projects or adopting land use policy, while introducing a more user-friendly format. The Ordinance standardizes existing processes for the review of proposed projects and policies and relocates them in one consolidated section of the Zoning Code. This reorganization will provide greater consistency and predictability for both applicants and the public at large.

Background

On October 11, 2018, the City Planning Commission (CPC) recommended approval of the proposed Processes and Procedures Ordinance, with additional instructions to City Planning to incorporate technical corrections identified by the public when advancing the Ordinance to Council.

City Planning continued to receive community input after the CPC hearing and decided to extend additional time for both internal and external review of the Ordinance. As a result, the Department has prepared a revised draft of the Ordinance, which incorporates various technical and policy changes. The revised draft will be taken back to the CPC for their consideration and action.

The Department has also prepared an [annotated version](#) of the revised Ordinance to aid readers who are interested in tracking changes to the Code provisions. Each section of the Ordinance is marked with annotations outlining whether the provisions are new or relocated from one section of the Zoning Code to another as part of this consolidation.

Additionally, the Department has prepared a [dedicated webpage](#) to serve as a resource for stakeholders at all levels of familiarity with current Zoning Code processes and

procedures. The webpage includes visual aids to explain the core concepts behind the ordinance, as well as key changes proposed by the ordinance.

Summary of Key Changes

Changes Previously Approved by the City Planning Commission:

- Standardization of mail notification to 21 days for public hearings on discretionary projects
- Mail notification radius tiers changed to adjacent and abutting, 300 feet, and 500 feet
- Standardization of appeals to allow a 15-day period during which appeals can be filed
- De novo standard of review for appellate decisions
- Batching of General Plan Amendment requests
- Establishment of 3 new processes
 - Policy Action
 - Alternative Compliance
 - Review or Modification of Entitlement
- Changes in decision maker
 - Adjustment – Zoning Administrator to Director
 - Evaluation of Non-Compliance – Director to Zoning Administrator
 - Nuisance Abatement/Revocation – Director to Zoning Administrator
 - Mixed Use CUP - APC to CPC
- Changes in process name
 - Zoning Administrator Determination to Class 1 CUP
 - Zoning Administrator CUP to Class 2 CUP
 - APC and CPC CUP to Class 3 CUP
 - Site Plan Review to Project Review
 - Administrative Clearance to Administrative Review
 - Project Permit Compliance to Project Compliance
 - Project Permit Compliance (Design Review Board) to Project Compliance (Design Review Board)
 - Project Permit Adjustment to Project Adjustment
 - Specific Plan Exception to Project Exception

New Proposed Changes:

- Require certified Neighborhood Councils to be notified by mail of public hearings
- Clarify the expiration date of planning approvals for development projects by distinguishing between “effectuation” and “utilization”
- Codify procedures for abandonment of approval
- Allow Modification of Entitlement process to be used for Project Review (formerly called Site Plan Review)

- Clarify the relationship between the procedures for Specific Plan Implementation and the Administrative Review process
- Amend provisions related to the duration of vesting rights granted upon payment of plan check fees
- Clarify the requirements to qualify for a “deemed to be approved private street”
- Amend Subdivision processes to better align with Subdivision Map Act by allowing Vesting Parcel Maps and adding a publication notice requirement for Parcel and Tract Maps

Frequently Asked Questions

How is the Processes and Procedures Ordinance part of the larger update to the City’s Zoning Code?

The Processes and Procedures Ordinance provides a framework for the larger effort to comprehensively revise the City’s Zoning Code to become more responsive and accessible to the public. Currently, the Zoning Code resides in Chapter 1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC). The Processes and Procedures Ordinance will establish a new Chapter 1A of the LAMC to serve as the home for the updated Zoning Code.

One key distinction between the Ordinance and the rest of the new Zoning Code is the implementation of the regulations. The Ordinance will apply citywide upon adoption in order to ensure that every property is subject to the same administrative rules. In contrast, the remainder of the new Zoning Code (everything other than the processes and procedures) will be implemented in phases, as each community plan is updated, starting with the Downtown Community Plan.

Why is the City of Los Angeles updating its Zoning Code?

Several years ago, City Planning set out to create a modern and efficient zoning system for Los Angeles. The proposed framework aims to establish a new Zoning Code that is more responsive to the needs of Los Angeles’s neighborhoods, in addition to being easier to use.

While conventional methods of zoning have traditionally focused on prohibiting incompatible uses, the new framework is focused on the physical design of a building as well as its use. As City Planning launches updates to its 35 Community Plans, new zoning will be developed to implement the policies and goals for specific neighborhoods across Los Angeles.

Will the Processes and Procedures Ordinance make it easier for me to use the Zoning Code?

The goal of the Processes and Procedures Ordinance is to make the rules for how the Department reviews land use and development applications more consistent and accessible, so that anyone can navigate the Zoning Code, not just paid experts. The revised Ordinance will house these processes in a central location, so that the rules are easy to find, instead of scattered randomly throughout the Zoning Code. The Ordinance also establishes a standard format for each process and includes flowcharts to serve as visual aids. These proposed changes are all intended to make the opportunities for public participation during the planning process clearer and easier to understand.

What is the difference between “processes” and “procedures,” and how are they being updated by the Ordinance?

The term “processes” describes the path for the review of a proposed entitlement, while the term “procedures” describes the steps in each phase of that review process. For example, a Conditional Use Permit is a process, while the specific rules for notification of a public hearing, appeal period, and time to act are the procedures for that process. After reviewing the over 120 different types of planning entitlements in the current Zoning Code, the Department identified processes that had very similar procedures and consolidated them to reduce unnecessary variation, ultimately resulting in about 60 unique review paths.

Will this Ordinance alter the current zoning regulations for my community?

This ordinance does not revise the zoning for any property in the City, including those located within an historic district or overlay. Any future changes to the zoning of a property will occur through the community plan update process, which consists of an extensive public process over the course of several years.

Will this Ordinance alter the existing requirements for public hearings?

All public hearings that are currently required under the Zoning Code will remain under the existing rules. The Ordinance does however attempt to standardize the noticing process. The Code today requires anywhere from 10 to 24 days of noticing prior to holding a public hearing; the Ordinance is proposing a 21-day notice period for all discretionary planning entitlements. Standardizing the notice period helps reduce confusion or ambiguity regarding mail notice requirements, and also empowers the public and applicants by providing predictable timelines.

Does the Ordinance alter any notifications to Neighborhood Councils?

Currently, the Department provides mail notification to Neighborhood Councils when an application is filed for a project in their neighborhood as part of the Department's Early Notification System. This early notification is provided as a courtesy, as the Zoning Code does not include any notification requirements regarding Neighborhood Councils. However, after consideration of public input and Department practice, the Ordinance will add a Zoning Code requirement that Neighborhood Councils be notified of public hearings whenever mail notice is required. This means that once the Ordinance is adopted, Neighborhood Councils will receive both mail notification of an application and mail notification of a public hearing for projects in their neighborhoods.

Does the Ordinance change the authorities of any decision maker?

The Ordinance maintains all of the decision-making authorities that exist in the current Zoning Code, with the exception of four processes. The decision maker for an Adjustment is proposed to be changed from the Zoning Administrator to the Director, as the Director already processes similar cases and has more staff resources. The decision makers for both an Evaluation of Non-Compliance and a Nuisance Abatement/Revocation are proposed to be changed from the Director to the Zoning Administrator to codify existing Department practice; the Director currently delegates their authority on Evaluation of Non-Compliance and Nuisance Abatement/Revocation cases to the Zoning Administrator. Lastly, the decision maker for a mixed use Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is proposed to be changed from the Area Planning Commission (APC) to the City Planning Commission (CPC) as a result of process consolidation.

Does the Ordinance affect which projects are subject to an appeal?

The Department is not altering which projects are discretionary and, by association, subject to an appeal. However, the Department is seeking to standardize the appeal period. The existing Zoning Code requires anywhere from 10 to 15 days to file an appeal; this Ordinance is proposing a standardized 15-day appeal period for all discretionary planning entitlements.

Are there additional opportunities for community input and engagement?

Later this winter, the Department will facilitate virtual meetings to guide community members through the proposed changes, as well as provide stakeholders with additional opportunities to ask questions about the revised Ordinance.

Who can I contact for additional information?

For questions, please contact: Bonnie Kim | bonnie.kim@lacity.org | (213) 978-1330

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