



# Downtown Zoning Code Update

## Background

The City is undertaking an effort to re-organize and re-write its zoning code. This effort, previously referred to as “re:code LA,” has established a new framework for the development of zoning tools in Los Angeles, and has culminated in a Preliminary Draft of the new Zoning Code, proposed for the Downtown Community Plan area. After the new Zoning Code is established Downtown, it will be adapted with additional new zoning tools to meet the needs and opportunities of communities throughout Los Angeles, through the ongoing Community Plan update process.

## What is the Zoning Code?

The Zoning Code is a part of the City’s Municipal Code (laws) that regulates the uses that are allowed on land throughout the City, as well as the size, shape, location, and configuration of land uses and buildings on a given property. As the primary method for regulating development, the Zoning Code is a key implementation tool for the Community Plans - the City’s General Plan Land Use Element, and the guiding vision for land use and development. The Zoning Code’s parcel-specific regulations are intended to ensure that the built environment reflects the Community Plan’s stated vision, guiding principles, and land use policies.

For example, if a Community Plan includes a goal to encourage wildlife habitat near the Los Angeles River, the Zoning Code can implement this goal by requiring that properties near the river include open space and specific methods of landscaping.

## Why is the Zoning Code being updated?

The City’s Zoning Code was first adopted in 1946, and has been amended and added to significantly since that time, but without a comprehensive approach to organization or readability. The present day Zoning Code is difficult for many in Los Angeles to navigate



and understand, and offers few tools to meet the many goals of the City's General Plan and Community Plans. The update to the Zoning Code is intended to provide greater clarity to users, and is intended to offer a more sophisticated set of tools to implement the City's goals.

## When is the new Zoning Code going to be adopted?

The new Zoning Code will be adopted incrementally, with the update of each Community Plan or through other community planning efforts. The Downtown Community Plan is the first Community Plan to propose newly developed zoning tools from the new Zoning Code. Efforts to develop new tools and expand the applicability of the new Zoning Code are underway in 12 additional Community Plan areas. To learn more about other Community Plan updates visit <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/community-plan-updates>

One major component of the new Zoning Code is the Administration section, which outlines how our Department reviews and acts upon various requests and applications. This section is currently in the adoption process and is referred to as the Process and Procedures Ordinance. To make zoning regulations more user-friendly, transparent, and predictable, the Process and Procedures program systematically reorganizes the administrative provisions of both the current Zoning Code, as well as the new Zoning Code.

## When will my community use the New Zoning Code?

The new Zoning Code provides a zoning system with the ability to be adapted to offer a more responsive set of zoning tools that help implement the visions of the many neighborhoods that make up the City of Los Angeles. The new zoning tools will be used as part of updating the City's 35 Community Plans.

The Preliminary Draft Zoning Code has been initially crafted around the goals of the Downtown Community Plan area. New zoning tools are being drafted for the Boyle Heights Community Plan area, which will be added to the new Zoning Code, and are due to be made public in Summer 2020, following a multi-year process with stakeholders. Additional Community Plan update efforts that will adapt and use the New Zoning Code are underway in the following 12 communities.

- Canoga Park-Woodland Hills-Winnetka-West Hills
- Encino-Tarzana
- Reseda-West Van Nuys
- Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks
- North Hollywood-Valley Village

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- Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass
  - West Los Angeles
  - Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey
  - Westchester-Playa del Rey
  - Venice
  - Harbor Gateway
  - Wilmington-Harbor City

In addition, other localized efforts are underway to use tools offered by the proposed new zoning system. These include

- The Orange Line Transit Neighborhood Plan
- The Purple Line Transit Neighborhood Plan
- The Slauson Corridor Transit Neighborhood Plan
- The Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan Amendment
- The Venice Local Coastal Plan and Specific Plan Amendment

## What is the structure of the new Zoning system?

The new Zoning Code is organized across 15 Articles that establish a new zoning system that allows for more responsive solutions to the wide variety of visions throughout the City. The new zones are modular and allow use and form to be regulated distinctly, capabilities that will help implement each community's vision and goals.

The fundamental components of the draft new Zoning Code are found in Articles 2 through 6:

- **2: Form** - Regulates the massing aspects of a building, such as floor area, height, how much of a lot can be covered, and where buildings can be located.
- **3: Frontage** - Regulates a building's relationship to the street and public realm, addressing things like transparency (doors and windows), articulation, and access.
- **4: Development Standards** - Establishes regulations for signage, landscaping, parking and grading, among others.
- **5: Use** - Regulates what specific uses are allowed on a property.
- **6: Density** - Regulates how many dwelling units (individual dwellings) are allowed on a property.



## Which parts of the new Zoning Code have been released?

In October 2019, City Planning released the initial components of the draft new Zoning Code for the Downtown Community Plan, including the Form, Frontage, Development Standards, Use, and Density, as well as an initially proposed draft Zoning Map. City Planning staff held a series of open houses in November, as well as numerous “office hours” and other small-group engagements through May 2020 to receive initial feedback.

In August 2020, City Planning released the remaining portions of the proposed new zoning system as part of the Preliminary Draft Zoning Code. These articles address the more technical functions of the zoning code, such as the rules of measurement, applicability, and relief; procedures for the establishment of subdivisions; etc.

## How can I get information and give input on the New Code?

In the coming months, City Planning will be soliciting feedback on and further refining the draft Downtown Community Plan and Preliminary Draft Zoning Code. This feedback will be used to make further refinements in future revised drafts. A Public Hearing will be held to solicit additional comments and feedback, after which a final draft of the new Zoning Code will be presented to the City Planning Commission.

In August 2020, City Planning published a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that addresses both the proposed Community Plan as well as the new Zoning Code. A public comment period of 75 days will be provided for those who wish to comment on the environmental analysis and conclusion of the Draft EIR.

To learn more about and get involved with Community Plan updates visit <https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/community-plan-updates>

For more background on the Downtown Community Plan update, see the Community Plan Fact Sheet & FAQ document.

To provide comments on the Preliminary Draft Zoning Code, please fill out the comment form [here](#). To provide comments on the Draft Downtown Community Plan Text, Plan Map, or Zoning Map please contact Brittany Arceneaux at [brittany.arceneaux@lacity.org](mailto:brittany.arceneaux@lacity.org).