EXHIBIT E.3:
Zoning Code Evaluation Report

Downtown Community Plan

CF 22-0617; CPC-2017-432-CPU; CPC-2014-1582-CA; ENV-2017-433-EIR

Recommended by the City Planning Commission on September 23, 2021

September 2022

PLAN re:code

A New Zoning Code for a 21st Century Los Angeles

To create livable communities, encourage sustainable development and foster economic vitality, we need a modern and user-friendly zoning code – we need to **re:code LA**.

Zoning Code Evaluation Report

DECEMBER 16, 2014


Sunset Triangle
Sunset Triangle

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CONSULTANT TEAM

The City has engaged an extensive team of planning and zoning consultants to work on this project. The team includes a mix of national and local consultants, led by Code Studio from Austin, Texas. The full consultant team includes the following firms:

National

Code Studio (Austin, TX)
Code Lead/Project Management

White & Smith (Kansas City, MO)
Legal/Drafting Support

Winter & Company (Boulder, CO)
Historic Preservation/Urban Design

Peter Park (Denver, CO)
Process/Administration Analysis

Lamphier Gregory (Oakland, CA)
Drafting Support/CEQA

Los Angeles/Metro Area

Torti Gallas and Partners (Los Angeles, CA)
Urban Design/Planning

Urban Insight (Los Angeles, CA)
Web Design/Web-Based Code

Tebo Environmental Consulting (Oxnard, CA)
CEQA

John Kaliski Architects (Los Angeles, CA)
Architecture

Patricia Smith (Los Angeles, CA)
Landscape Architecture

HR&A Advisors (Los Angeles, CA)
Economics

The Robert Group (Los Angeles, CA)
Public Outreach Support

VPE Public Relations (South Pasadena, CA)
Public Outreach Support

The Doyle Logan Company (Los Angeles, CA)
Project Identity

Design Gnomes (Los Angeles, CA)
Graphic Design/Editing

PROJECT BACKGROUND

re:code LA, a comprehensive revision of LA's outdated zoning code, is one of most ambitious projects of its kind ever attempted.

When the current zoning code for the City was written in 1946, Harry Truman was president, World War II had just ended, and the population of the City was just under 2 million (roughly half what it is today). The zoning code at that time was a manageable document of 84 pages, and was appropriate for the relative simplicity of the City it was responsible for regulating.

Over the next 57 years, LA's population more than doubled. During this period, entire neighborhoods have completely transformed both demographically and physically, the hubs of commerce and activity have shifted multiple times, and residents of Los Angeles of 1946 would scarcely recognize the current city.

In an attempt to manage this rapidly changing place, the City has added on layers of new plans, overlays, and property-specific development limitations to keep up with market trends and community needs. As a result, LA's zoning code grew from 84 pages in 1946 to over 600 pages now. Today, over 60% of the City's land is covered by special overlays and site-specific designations. These amendments to a particular parcel of land have become the norm, rather than the exception. As a result, development under the zoning code is now a challenging process.

In response, the City of Los Angeles is undertaking a 5-year, $5 million project to completely rewrite the zoning code. There are numerous goals for project, including improved clarity, procedural streamlining, alignment with the City's plans, attracting investment and improving the quality of life for all Angelenos.

LA needs a new code approach. It has been over 50 years since the last comprehensive review and update of the regulations—far too long!

This time:

» Let's zone like we mean it, in a transparent way. No more using industrial zones to build shopping centers, no more special zone change conditions on top of overlays on top of outdated base zones.

» Let's broadcast our intention to get quality development for everyone. Improving the development standards citywide is sorely needed, and graphically illustrating those rules helps the world know what we're looking for.

» Let's streamline the review processes to achieve the outcomes we want with less hassle. We need to ensure that small projects take a modest amount of effort, and big projects that match our plans can be reviewed and built before the market for their product has changed.

» Let's upgrade our neighborhood protection. Fixing the transition between zones of differing intensity, managing impacts created by specific uses, avoiding incompatible uses, protecting our elegant historic resources, and ensuring a quality lifestyle in many different flavors, from rural to urban.

» Let's make LA a model of how web-based zoning gets done right. There is a substantial need to make zoning more accessible, and digital approaches across the country fall short of furnishing a user-friendly document to all possible devices. This project can be revolutionary in its ability to serve up the code in a smart, functional, easy to use way.

BASIS OF ANALYSIS

Any views or opinions presented in this report are solely those of the consultant team and do not necessarily represent those of the City.

In preparing this report, a variety of regulatory and planning policy documents and regulations were reviewed. While these documents provide a foundation for understanding LA's planning and regulatory framework, it was the time spent touring LA and meeting with staff, stakeholders and the general public that provided the details of the problems and opportunities facing the City.

An organized tour of the City was conducted that included key members of City staff. The tour covered San Pedro, South LA, West LA, Central LA and the Valley. The tour allowed the out-of-town consultants to get a feel for the sheer size of the City. Tour participants were able to match the details of the current zoning code with real life examples and obtain a running commentary from City staff as they discussed recent planning initiatives and proposed or recently built projects.

This evaluation report provides recommendations to address inadequacies with the current zoning code. These recommendations represent potential solutions that may or may not be necessarily acceptable in LA, but serve as the starting point for discussion, prior to code drafting.

The input received from stakeholders, City staff and the general public offer an invaluable local perspective problems with the current zoning code. Each perspective has insight into what is working and what is not working. By establishing an open dialogue, a more complete picture of what is happening and what LA wants to see happen has been pieced together.

This analysis requires the consultant team to read the existing provisions very literally. In other words, the review focuses on what the zoning code actually says. While this approach can result in occasional misinterpretations of intent or established local traditions, such miscues provide valuable insight into provisions in need of clarification.

Finally, it is important to note that peculiar inconsistencies or weaknesses in the current zoning code are in no way intended to reflect poorly on the drafters or administrators. The existing zoning code has not been comprehensively updated for a long time, so it is to be expected that amendments prepared by various authors have resulted in some inconsistencies.

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED
General Plan Framework Element, Housing Element, Health Atlas, Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles (goals draft)
Community Plans (30+)
Specific Plans (15+)
Coastal Zone Plan, Venice Local Coastal Plan (draft)
Development Reform Strategic Plan
Planning and Zoning Code
Community Plan Implementation Overlay drafts (3)
River Implementation Overlay draft
Pedestrian Oriented Districts (4)
Community Design Overlays (18)
Sign Districts (2)
Residential Floor Area Districts (2)
Citywide Design Guidelines (Residential, Commercial, Industrial)
Other Design Guidelines (Downtown, Small Lot Development)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In order to create a document that appropriately regulates such a diverse and dynamic city, the zoning code project must receive input from every corner of the City. Zoning forms the foundation of the City's built environment and has a profound effect on the daily lives of every Los Angeles resident.

First and foremost, a 21-member **Zoning Advisory Committee (ZAC)** has been established to provide expertise on a wide range of land use issues. The ZAC will serve as a sounding board for the broader community for the duration of the project. They will play a key role in advising the City and consultant team on code drafting direction.

As part of the public engagement effort, a **project website** has been established to provide real-time updates to the Los Angeles community, as well as receive on-going input and feedback. This allows the public to remain involved outside of formal public meetings, and provides an opportunity for those unable to attend public meetings to contribute to the project. **Twitter**, **Facebook** and **YouTube** accounts have also been established in order to expand the website's reach.

To date, the general public has been engaged early and often, and they will continue to play an essential role over the next several years as the nuts and bolts of the zoning code are written. In July 2013, five public "listening sessions" were held at various across LA. The purpose of the "listening sessions" was to introduce the project, and most importantly to hear comments and input about zoning-related issues. A wide variety of issues were discussed, concerns raised, and questions asked.

Focus group interviews were also held with people that regularly administer the existing zoning code (City staff), and with people that may be affected by any changes (residents, business owners, attorneys, developers, builders, engineers, architects, designers).

Finally, in November of 2013, a "virtual listening session" was held. The virtual listening session was a webinar that allowed participants to log on remotely from any location to watch the listening session presentation, followed by an on-line question and answer session with the consultant team and City staff.

Common Themes. As expected, the initial public feedback reflects the broad range of needs and desires of LA residents. Many different concerns have been raised, but some things are common to all of LA. While the downtown loft dweller and the Sylmar family might have different visions for their respective neighborhoods, there are concerns that are shared by Angelenos, regardless of lifestyle.

Out-of-Scale Development: Many Los Angeles residents have experienced development that they feel is out of place, and doesn't match the look and feel of their community or its vision for the future.

Uncertainty: Many Angelenos are skeptical about new development in their community, some of which leads to out-of-scale development.

Traffic: Often a topic of conversation in LA, Angelenos waste valuable hours every year sitting in traffic. Year after year, Los Angeles suffers from some of the worst traffic congestion in the country.

Environment: Although air and water quality in Los Angeles has improved considerably through recent environmental efforts, it still ranks among the worst in the country. Communities located near freeways, the Port of LA and heavy industrial centers are the most affected.

Additional Reading

Zoning Code Advisory Committee

Listening Session Opening Presentation

Listening Session Description and Notes

CODE DRAFTING STEPS

This section offers a high-level view of how the job of creating a new zoning code can be accomplished. Of course, "the devil is in the details," and substantial work must be occur during this project to see that these outcomes are achieved. It is important to agree on the fundamental steps of the code rewrite before drafting begins, and that's where the following steps fit in:

STEP 1: Develop an Outline for the New Zoning Code

STEP 2: Review and Incorporate External Material into the New Zoning Code

STEP 3: Consolidate Existing Zones and Their Overlays into Base Zones;

STEP 4: Draft New Zones to Implement Future Planning

STEP 5: Prepare New Standards that Improve the Quality of Development; and

STEP 6: Strategically Amend the Zoning Map

STEP 1. Develop an Outline for the New Zoning Code

The first step in preparing a new zoning code involves developing a more intuitive organization for the code contents. The current outline doesn't offer a clear entry point for the average user. To the right and on the following page, the existing outline is compared to a more typical outline. The more typical approach groups dimensional standards (such as lot size, density, setback, FAR and height) by zone. Use provisions are located in a separate article, including a consolidated use matrix and specific use standards. Site development standards (signs, parking landscaping, lighting) are consolidated into a single article. The key concept here is to group similar rules together for ease of use, and reduce the duplication of material to a bare minimum.

STEP 2. Review and Incorporate External Material into the New Zoning Code

Once a new outline as been determined, the next step would involve reformatting all of the existing material to be retained, moving it over to the new outline. This includes bringing in provisions that are not located in the zoning code today, but are used as part of the zoning system. These materials include the staff administrative interpretations that are filed in the Planning Department, any prescriptive (measurable) standards found in companion documents such as Community Plans, Specific Plans, design guidelines and other documents that are used in conjunction with the existing zoning code.

Existing Specific Plans serve as a source for place-specific approaches to regulating development. Due to their strong tie to a particular location, they offer insight into how the citywide zoning

EXISTING ZONING OUTLINE
Article 1: General Provisions
Article 1.2: Administrative Citations
Article 1.5: Planning Comprehensive Planning Program
Article 2: Specific Planning - Zoning Comprehensive Zoning Plan
Article 2.9: Condominiums, Community Apartments and Stock Cooperatives
Article 3: Specific Plan - Zoning Supplemental Use Districts
Article 4: Public Benefit Projects
Article 4.3: Eldercare Facility Unified Permit Process
Article 4.4: Sign Regulations
Article 4.5: Transfer of Floor Area Rights - Central City Community Plan and City Center Redevelopment Project Areas
Article 5: Referrals - Land for Public Use
Article 6: Temporary Regulations Relating to Land Use Approvals for Properties Damaged in a Local Emergency
Article 6.1: Review of Development Projects
Article 7: Division of Land Regulations
Article 8: Private Street Regulations
Article 9: Fees

TYPICAL ZONING OUTLINE

General Provisions
Legal status provisions, effective date

Zones
Residential, mixed use, downtown, industrial, special purpose, overlay zone standards

Uses
Consolidated use matrix, use standards

Site Development Standards
Parking, access, landscaping, buffers, screening, lighting, sign standards

Streets and Blocks
Street cross-sections, streetscape, block lengths

Division of Land
Subdivision, public improvements, utilities

Administration
Review bodies, procedures, nonconformities, enforcement

Definitions
Defined terms

code can be more place-based. Existing Specific Plans will not be replaced by the adoption of the new zoning code. However, borrowing the best tools and techniques included in existing Specific Plans and Overlays will ensure the latest thinking about quality place-making can be embedded in the new zoning code.

Determining the full spectrum of rules in place today is critical to understanding which of today's tools will be brought forward in the new zoning code. As this material is pulled together, it must be reviewed for clarity, consistency with the remainder of the zoning code, and modernization (where necessary).

The intent here is to ensure that the new zoning code learns from the experiences embodied in these external documents, but provides a citywide approach to regulating development.

STEP 3. Consolidate Existing Zones and their Overlays into Base Zones

In many portions of the City, base zoning (such as R-1A or C-2) is layered with a variety of other overlay or supplemental use zones that amend the rules in the base zone. It is rarely clear how the various layers of zoning interact. A key starting point for much of LA is to consolidate the various layers of zoning into a single base zone. While this implies more zones will be found in the new zoning code, the use of the web-based code will allow users to pull only those requirements they need for their project.

The intent here is to consolidate the existing rules so that applicants and neighbors only need to look one place for them. While on its face, creating a variety of new zones seems to make the ordinance more complex, users will find it easier to find all of their rules grouped together.

STEP 4. Draft New Zones to Implement Future Planning

No matter which type of zone is considered (residential, commercial, industrial), it appears that recent community plans cannot be fully implemented with the series of zones available today (as seen by the myriad of modifications to the base zones in use today, such as the overuse of Q, T or D conditions, exceptions and overlay zones). As part of this project, whether any zone changes are made or not, a toolkit of new zones intended to offer solutions for implementing Community Plans is needed. This toolkit starts with the examination of the existing patterns of development throughout the City.

The preparation of new zones begins with those needed to implement the upcoming City Center and City Center North Community Plans, along with those needed to implement the transit neighborhood plans just getting started. The adoption of these plans provides an opportunity to put new zones to the test on the ground. Street and block patterns, lot features, building placement and form will all be reviewed using the City's GIS data and Survey LA data. A series of zones that responds to these patterns, along with desired patterns of new development identified in Community Plans, will be prepared.

These zones will serve as a parallel code, providing better options for developers and neighborhoods to implement their vision of LA. New zones will be put in place through the zone change process.

Following adoption of the new zoning code, community planners will be trained on the new zone options available, to enhance the community conversation about plan implementation.

STEP 5. Prepare New Standards that Improve the Quality of Development

The quality of development varies widely across the City, and was a frequent cause for concern on the part of stakeholders interviewed in the process. The new zoning code must take advantage of improved development standards already tested through their application in the myriad of overlay zones, specific plans, design guidelines and other regulatory components of today's zoning system.

Seeking out the best existing development standards, and reviewing and improving them based on best practice across the country, will provide an opportunity for many elements of development quality to improve, including, at minimum:

» Streets and blocks

» Streetscapes

» Landscaping, buffers and screening

» Parking and access

» Outdoor site lighting

» Signs

These new standards may be applied in existing zones, so that incremental improvements can be made in existing areas, as well as in the new zones described in Step 4.

STEP 6. Strategically Amend the Zoning Map

Over the next 4 years, as the new zoning code is developed and implemented, a variety of parallel planning projects will offer the opportunity to change the Zoning Map and implement new zones.

Downtown Community Plans. The Central City and Central City North Community Plans, once completed, should be implemented with new zones and development standards from the new zoning code.

Transit Neighborhood Plans (TOD). Station area plans provide an excellent opportunity to implement new zones and development standards.

Other Community Plans. Any other community plans completed during this project's timeline should be implemented with new zones and development standards from the new code as well. If, in fact, the new zoning code can create an effective toolkit for Community Plan implementation, it will speed the City's ability to update and adopt new Community Plans. Using the new code tools would be faster than the current customization model, since no new code language would be needed.

No zone changes to Specific Plans are proposed to occur through **re:code LA.** However, where concepts embedded in the new zoning code provide superior regulations for existing Specific Plan areas, the community may consider a future zone change request to apply the new code in place of their Specific Plan.

THE RESULT

The result of this set of steps will be:

» A new zoning code for Downtown and the rest of the City;

» Clarity about existing zone/overlay combinations, and stability in places where these combinations accurately reflect both existing patterns and desired future patterns;

» A palette of new zones appropriate to the City's current and future plan implementation needs;

» Improved development standards citywide; and

» Zone changes in strategic areas, including Downtown, other current Community Plan areas, and Transit Neighborhood Plan areas.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

The following pages of this report discuss individual topic areas in greater detail. It is the intent of these sections to help those unfamiliar with the regulations to understand where the new zoning code drafting might take the City. These recommendations include modest reforms to existing provisions, as well as significant proposed changes in the way LA regulates development. A complete summary of the proposed actions is included at the end of this document.

Some of the observations lie outside of the zoning code rewrite process (see the Summary of Recommendations on page 75 for details on what is part of this project, what is part of a parallel effort, and what must wait for a future planning project).

Zoning Evaluation Topics

1. Distinct Neighborhoods

Recommendations to help promote and preserve neighborhood character.

2. Housing Affordability and Diversity

Recommendations to help improve housing diversity and choice

3. Centers and Corridors

Recommendations to help enhance commercial corridors and centers.

4. Transportation Choices

Recommendations to help improve mobility choices across the City.

5. Jobs and Innovation

Recommendations to help strengthen the City as a global center for employment and innovation.

6. A Strong Core

Recommendations to help improve daytime and nighttime activity Downtown.

7. A Healthy City

Recommendations to help improve community health through greener, more resilient development.

8. Code Delivery

Recommendations to help ensure an open, transparent and responsive delivery and review process.

1. DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOODS

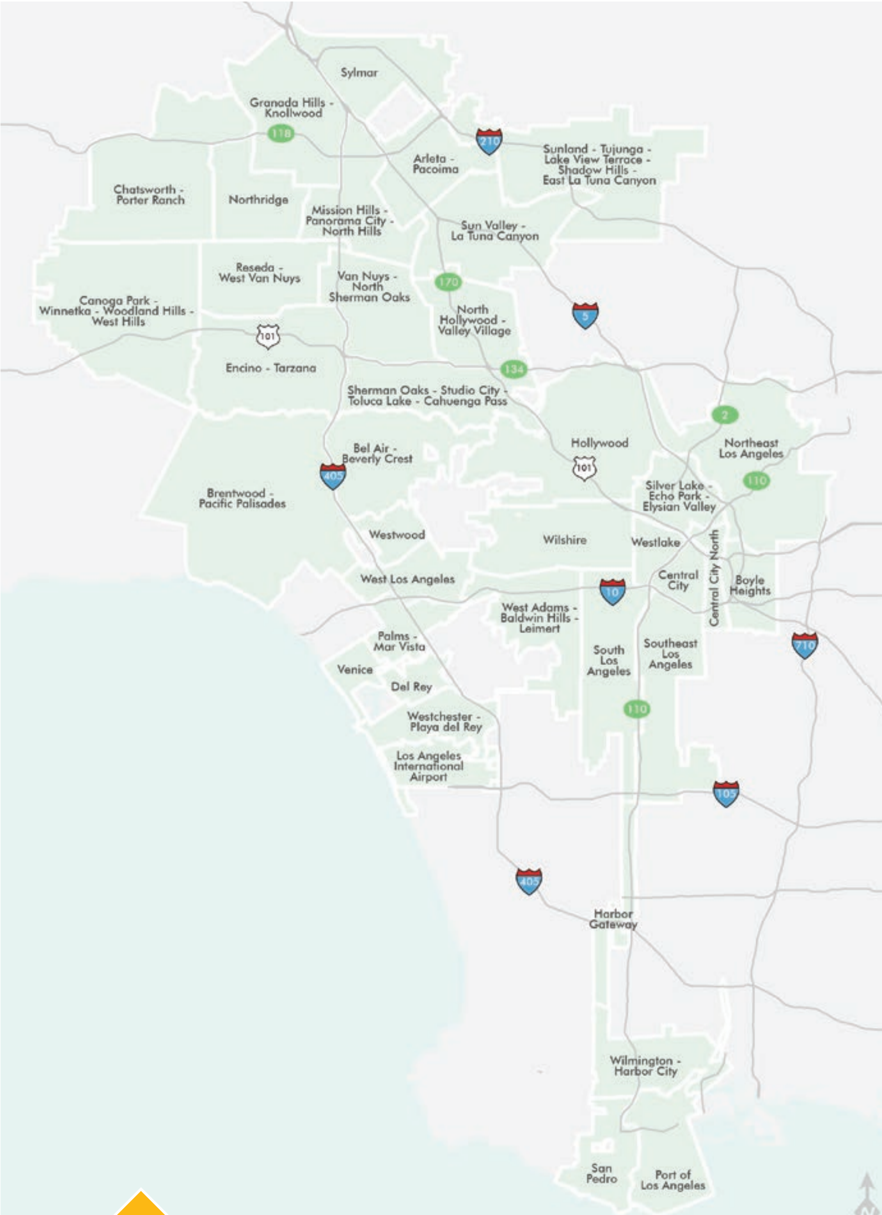
Provide a clearer, more prescriptive approach to promoting and preserving neighborhood character.

Los Angeles is the second largest city in the U.S. and a global economic and cultural hub. Its boundaries stretch from the shoreline of San Pedro to the edge of the San Fernando Valley, and from coastal Venice to the hills of Northeast Los Angeles, encompassing a total of 500 square miles. The City's 3.9 million inhabitants come from all over the world and the size and diversity of Los Angeles are two of its most celebrated assets.

With so many people from a wide variety of backgrounds, the City can feel more like a collection of smaller cities than one cohesive community. Recognized neighborhoods such as Thai Town, Little Bangladesh and Koreatown highlight the many ethnic enclaves located throughout the City. Nearly half of the City is Latino (of any ethnicity). There are more Koreans in Los Angeles than any other American city, and the Los Angeles area is home to about half of all Armenians living in the U.S. There are 224 languages spoken in the City, 180 of which are used in local publications and 92 of which are identified in local schools. There are 130 postal service ZIP codes overlapping the City's borders, creating the impression that places like Van Nuys, Reseda and Venice are actually separate cities, rather than neighborhoods within Los Angeles.

Not only is the population of Los Angeles diverse, its physical environment contains elements of almost every development pattern. From the rural hills of Sunland-Tujunga to the dense urbanity of Westlake, the City offers its residents a wide spectrum of living environments.

The City's diversity, both in terms of population and built form, is one of its greatest assets. However, this diversity presents a challenge: How can the City effectively regulate land use in a comprehensive way, while accommodating each "city" in this "city of cities?" A one-size-fits-all approach to regulating development in LA will not work. To its credit, the City has recognized this, and has made efforts to accommodate the wide variety of its neighborhoods. Today, there are 95 City-recognized neighborhoods, 35 Community Plan areas, and 7 Area Planning Commissions handling approvals. Additionally, a multitude of Specific Plans and Overlay Zones designed to address neighborhood issues have been incrementally adopted over the years. On top of all that, there are years of interpretation by various City staff. Unfortunately, this layering of new tools and interpretations over the years has created a complicated web of rules that benefits from professional assistance, even for routine development. This project offers an opportunity to reduce the complexity of this system, while at the same time maintaining the useful nuances across this vast City of Los Angeles.



Community Plans guide the physical development of neighborhoods by establishing the goals and policies for land use. In LA today there are 35 Community Plan areas.

1. DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOODS

1.1. Combine the Existing Residential Requirements into a New System: Translate existing residential zones plus overlays into new base zones.

1.2. Continue to Protect Historic Resources and Established Neighborhoods: Consider adding neighborhood conservation districts, improving base zoning standards.

1.3. Address Impacts within Single-Family Residential Neighborhoods: Unlicensed boarding houses and short-term rentals are perceived as threats to single-family neighborhoods.

1.4. Enhance Multi-Family Design Standards: Ensure multi-family project quality, apply Baseline Mansionization and Hillside standards.

1.5. Improve The Transition Between Corridors and Neighborhoods: Set standards for commercial and industrial development abutting residential areas.

1.6. Retain the Rural Lifestyle: Provide for the long-term viability of equine keeping and other unique uses in rural areas.

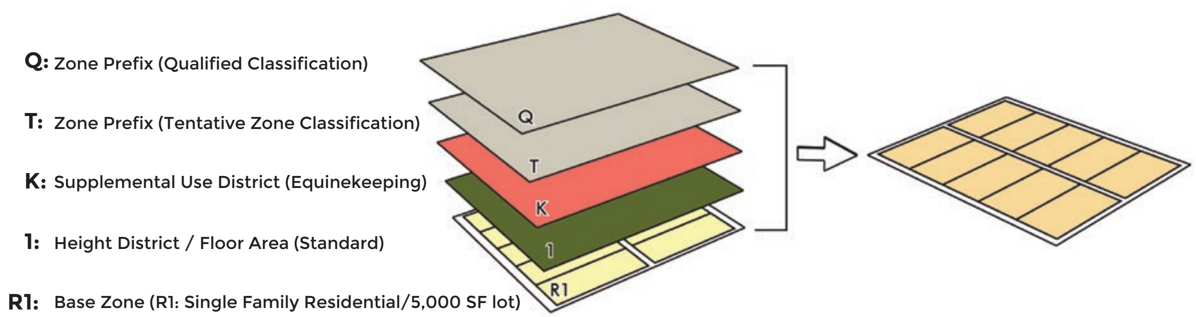
1.1. COMBINE THE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS INTO A NEW SYSTEM

Translate existing residential zones plus overlays into new base zones.

Today's residential zones across the City appear simple at first glance. There are a limited number of base residential zones, and the oldest zones are the most frequently used (R1, for example, which covers about 16% of the City). However, scratching beneath the surface unveils a myriad of modifications to the base zones, the most recent being the Baseline Mansionization and Hillside ordinances, along with the Residential Floor Area Overlay. Sometimes the zones applied to a specific property are actually multiple layers deep.

Each combination of base zoning, rezoning conditions and zoning overlays results in a different (and unique) set of rules for property development. Using the City's Geographic Information System (GIS), it was determined there are 266 different "zones" created by existing combinations of base and overlay zones.

One of the goals of **re:code LA** is to simplify and clarify the existing zoning regulations. It is important to note that simplification does not necessary mean losing any of the nuance applied through the variety of zones created over time. The most straight-forward approach to simplifying residential areas without a loss of carefully-crafted regulation is to consolidate the series of zones into a single description of the zones currently in place.



The intent of re:code LA is to simplify and clarify the existing zoning regulations. Each combination of base zoning, rezoning conditions and zoning overlays results in a different (and unique) set of rules for property development.

As an example, a residential lot may be zoned R1 (the base district), be located in height district 1(also part of the base district regulations), be subject to the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (and overlay), and be subject to a Residential Floor Area Overlay (a second overlay). This requires a review of at least 4 different sections of the zoning code to determine what can be built on the lot.

This process would allow for a variety of new base zones that incorporate the full spectrum of overlays currently applied throughout the City.

The City could apply these new base zones, provided they encompass all of the overlays applied today, through a table adopted along with the zoning text that converts each zone combination to its new zone letter designation. The City could release a new Zoning Map that renames each combination of base zone plus overlays uniquely. No parcel-specific zone change would be required.

It is important to note that if the zone applied to a current neighborhood is incorrect, this approach to new zoning will NOT fix existing land use compatibility problems. For example, if an area is zoned RE9 (allowing 9,000 square foot lots), but developed today with ½-acre lots (20,000 square foot or greater), then a lot might be split to the zoned lot size of 9,000 square feet. This change in neighborhood character may not be desired

This image from ZIMAS shows a series of residential zones. Each combination of numbers and letters describes a what is essentially a different zone.

by the community; however, a planning process and then a zone change must occur to cure this problem. The adoption of new zoning text as part of **re:code LA** will not make changes of this kind, although it will establish a set of new clear, context-sensitive zones to be applied when implementing Community Plans.

Where residential zones are also subject to Q (Qualified Classifications), T (Classifications) or D (Development Limitations) that have been applied by the City Council as part of a zone change, the conditions should be reviewed, and where appropriate, incorporated into the new base zones or general development standards. Actual removal of the conditions applied during a previous zone change requires another zone change approved by the City Council. This step of removing Q, T or D conditions would typically occur following a planning process, such as the adoption of a Community Plan.

Once this citywide analysis of zones is complete, additional new zones may be added to the code that are a better fit for existing neighborhoods than current zones.

The preparation of new zones begins with those needed to implement the upcoming City Center and City Center North Community Plans, along with those needed to implement the transit neighborhood plans just getting started. The adoption of these plans provides an opportunity to put new zones to the test on the ground. Street and block patterns, lot features, building placement and form will all be reviewed using the City's GIS data and Survey LA data. A series of zones that responds to these patterns, along with desired patterns of new development identified in Community Plans, will be prepared.

These zones will serve as a parallel code, providing better options for developers and neighborhoods to implement their vision of LA. New zones will be put in place through the zone change process.

Additional Reading

Baseline Mansionization Ordinance

Baseline Hillside Ordinance

Residential Floor Area Overlay

1.2. CONTINUE TO PROTECT HISTORIC RESOURCES AND ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS

Consider adding neighborhood conservation districts, improving base zoning standards.

The Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) is one of the most effective tools for maintaining the character of Los Angeles neighborhoods. The new zoning code will retain the HPOZ system, and other zoning code reforms will likely help it to function more efficiently and effectively. Unfortunately, this review process cannot be extended to apply to all neighborhoods. Applying historic guidelines to each application is time-consuming and demands significant staff effort. The existing staff (and any anticipated future staff) would be unable to process permits for all neighborhoods using this labor-intensive model.

While some modest improvements to the existing procedures and standards for HPOZ's may be possible, the most important change the City could make would be to create base zones that more effectively match the patterns of existing and desired development. In many cases, a more context-sensitive district would resolve many of the concerns that lead to the establishment of HPOZ's, especially about compatibility of infill construction. Preservation of older building stock could also be furthered by rules that ensure that retaining an existing home and adding on is more advantageous than demolition and erection of a new home.

Improving the predictability of the base zones would be a very powerful way to support neighborhoods across the City. Regrettably, **re:code LA** does not have the resources to conduct a citywide assessment of neighborhoods and conduct zone changes for all of the neighborhoods at once.

A new tool allowing neighborhoods to develop measurable standards (not guidelines) to match the base zoning to existing or desired character could be developed. In many communities, this tool is described as neighborhood conservation, and applied as an overlay. Los Angeles currently allows modifications to the Baseline Mansionization ordinance by creating a Residential Floor Area Overlay, which reduces floor area to more accurately match the existing development pattern, but this is only one type of standard that could be modified. Others worth considering include:

» Prevailing setbacks (front, side, rear)

» Building height (principal, accessory)

» Building size (principal, accessory)

» Roof style (pitched, flat, reflective property)

» Architectural elements (porches, dormers)

In most neighborhood conservation regulations, the standards must be based on existing characteristics of the neighborhood, ensuring that the end result is compatible infill. The recent Survey LA work could serve as a foundation for these new overlays. Application of this neighborhood conservation tool would require a zone change to apply the overlay zone.

Additional Reading

Office of Historic Resources website

Angelino Heights is a small quarter within Echo Park. It is most notable for its historic Victorian era residences.

1.3. ADDRESS IMPACTS WITHIN SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Unregulated group living arrangements, short-term rentals, eldercare facilities, and State licensed community care facilities are perceived as threats to single-family neighborhoods.

During the listening sessions held at the beginning of this project, many community members complained of unacceptable impacts from both permitted and non-permitted uses in single-family residential neighborhoods. Most of the complaints centered on the proliferation of short-term rentals and unregulated group living arrangements, many of which house more residents than the typical single-family home. In addition to unregulated group living arrangements, eldercare facilities and State-licensed community care facilities that locate in the City's single family neighborhoods are also a source of concern for residents.

While some safety issues were raised, the principal concerns were quality of life impacts, including parking, noise, and infrastructure. Recently, the City Council formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Community Care Facilities to coordinate a comprehensive approach to this complex issue. The Committee is examining ways to ensure that these much needed housing types can effectively locate throughout the City, while protecting the character of existing neighborhoods.

Short-term rental of single-family homes can also create impacts in single-family neighborhoods. Based on the City's Transient Occupancy Residential Structure ordinance, leasing units for fewer than 30 days is prohibited in single-family zones. Unless the City decides to set new policy on this issue, the new zoning code will simply clarify when and where short-term rentals are allowed.

Eldercare facilities are permitted in single-family neighborhoods through the Eldercare Facility Unified Permit at the discretion of the Zoning Administrator. This entitlement was added to the zoning code in 2006 to provide a mechanism to locate this much-needed housing type within communities where senior housing was in great demand. However, with the success of the ordinance, issues have arisen related to the scale and density of these facilities, which can contain over 100 units or guest rooms. In response to these concerns, the City may be issuing additional guidance with regard to urban design and buffering criteria for eldercare facilities when locating in single-family neighborhoods.

State-licensed community care facilities also need to be addressed in the new zoning code. Although the State mandates that cities treat small community care facilities (those serving 6 or fewer residents) as they do any single-family residence, cities are allowed some discretion in permitting for larger community care facilities (those serving 7 or more residents). Many other California cities use the conditional use process to regulate larger community care facilities. This issue is being discussed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Community Care Facilities as well.

Lastly, it is the unregulated group living arrangements that have created the greatest amount of discussion and controversy. This all-encompassing term includes a myriad of non-traditional living situations where residents might not be related to each other and who might have been selected to live in the residence by a third party. In any case, the City's current definition of "family"could be interpreted to allow virtually any group of people, regardless of number, to share a residence in a single-family neighborhood. Unless the Ad Hoc Committee on Community Care Facilities working on this issue adopts alternate provisions, the current definition may be carried over to the new zoning code.

Additional Reading

Community Care Ordinance

1.4. ENHANCE MULTI-FAMILY DESIGN STANDARDS

Ensure multi-family project quality, apply Baseline Mansionization and Hillside standards.

The **re:code LA** project provides an excellent opportunity to revise the multi-family design standards applied today in both multi-family and mixed use zones. The recently-adopted Residential Citywide Design Guidelines provide an excellent resource to start the consideration of improved design.

During the preparation of the recent Baseline Mansionization and Baseline Hillside regulations, many communities asked the City to also include multi-family projects as part of the system. With a working knowledge of the impact of these two ordinances on other residential projects, it is time to apply the concepts of these two ordinances to multi-family development.

Additional Reading

Residential Citywide Design Guidelines

Baseline Mansionization Ordinance

Baseline Hillside Ordinance

An example of a well-designed multi-family complex (Martin Luther King & Havard). The re:code LA project provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that new multi-family can achieve a higher quality of development.

1.5. IMPROVE THE TRANSITION BETWEEN CORRIDORS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Set standards for commercial and industrial development abutting residential areas.

One of the most frequent issues discussed in recent Community Plans is the transition between residential areas and adjacent commercial or industrial areas. These edge conditions are not handled well in the current zones.

In other communities, transitions are often handled with specific development standards that apply in every case where commercial or industrial zoning abuts a low-density residential area. Typical transition tools are focused on various anticipated impacts, including:

- Height. The City's current height transition provisions are lost in the Exceptions portion of the zoning code.
- Glare and Noise. Where a commercial or industrial area abuts a residential zone, it is common to provide for a screening wall and landscaping to reduce the impact of glare, noise, dust and other common externalities.
- Uses. In some cases, specific uses (such as outdoor animal care or drive-through facilities) should be located away from residential areas. Distance separation from residential or limits on hours of outdoor activity can be applied to specific, impact-generating uses.
- Site Design. Location of dumpsters and other site elements can also affect adjacent residential areas. Standards that minimize these impacts should apply to all development.

Some transition tools seek to connect neighborhoods with adjoining services, transit, or parks, while also promoting enhanced edge conditions. These transitions are a positive opportunity for interaction with adjacent property.

The edge conditions within the same zone are typically not as critical, since "like meets like." This does not mean that screening and careful management of site elements are not important components within the same zone.

Over the years, the City has used many techniques to manage the relationship of buildings and parking to adjacent development. One that is especially problematic is the application of the Parking Zone (P) to portions of a site in order to restrict the development footprint. This technique was especially common along corridors in the Valley. Unfortunately, application of the Parking Zone does not necessarily result in an attractive transition or edge condition, and Parking Zone footprints hamper redevelopment of these sites, which require a zone change to eliminate the P Zone.

Assuming that new techniques to manage the transition of these zones are adopted and generally applied to transitions, the Parking Zone should be replaced by reverting that area to the surrounding zone on the property. This will allow flexibility to redevelop the project in the future, and to reinvest in the current site improvements.

One of the most frequent issues discussed in recent Community Plans is the transition between residential areas and adjacent commercial or industrial areas.

1.6. RETAIN THE RURAL LIFESTYLE

Provide for the long-term viability of equine keeping and other uses in unique rural areas.

This project provides an opportunity to modernize the City's approach to animals in rural and suburban residential zones. The various approaches currently used in residential, residential suburban and agricultural zones may not match the needs of many residents who wish to retain a rural lifestyle.

The current approach limits both large and small animals kept on the property based on area. Some revisiting of the list of animals allowed (for example, chinchillas are not as common today as they were in the 1960's) is also appropriate.

In many instances, zone changes for surrounding land are imposing on the location of stables and other rural structures, rendering them nonconforming due to zoning code distance separation requirements. This provision should be changed in the **re:code LA** process.

Unfortunately, the **re:code LA** process cannot address the land area allocated for rural uses in Community Plans and Specific Plans. However, as with industrial areas, long-term retention must be planned and those plans must be consistently implemented, or the rural lifestyle in LA will gradually disappear.

re:code LA provides an opportunity to improve the approach to animals in rural and suburban residential zones.

Infrastructure needs in rural portions of the City differ from those in the urban area.

2. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND DIVERSITY

Expand housing options to provide for a more complete range of people and incomes.

Great neighborhoods are the building blocks of great communities. One of the characteristics of a great community is representation of a variety of people— young and old, rich and poor. Neighborhoods should be places where people of all ages and abilities can live as long as they'd like. The 2013-2021Housing Element specifically calls for a City where housing production and preservation result in an adequate supply of ownership and rental housing that is safe, healthy, sanitary and affordable to people of all income levels, ethnicities and ages, and suitable for their various needs.

As Los Angeles continues to grow, a broader array of housing options that serves a greater mix of incomes will be needed. Today, the LA region is among the least affordable housing markets in the country and undoubtedly the cost of buying or renting a home will only continue to increase in the future. A median-income household in Los Angeles County can afford only 24% of the homes currently for sale. Compare this with the Chicago metro area, where 73% of homes currently for sale are "within reach" of the middle class. The lack of affordable housing near jobs and shopping leads to long commutes that contribute to increased traffic. Retail and service industry workers can no longer afford to live close to where they work because of the cost of housing. According to a recent study by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, Angelenos are the least likely urban dwellers in the nation to become homeowners. 52% of Angelenos live in rental properties, more than any other metropolitan area.

The dissolution of Redevelopment Agencies statewide removed an entity that helped develop hundreds of housing units annually. This change means a loss of a dedicated source of funding for the construction and investment of new housing units in the LA, a void that has not yet been filled.

The 2013-2021 Housing Element specifically promotes a wide variety of housing types to be distributed equitably across the City. Zoning regulations are often seen as a barrier to housing choice and affordability. Typical barriers include minimum lot size and maximum densities, as well as restrictions on specific housing types such as manufactured housing, multi-family housing and transitional housing. This chapter discusses some of the more pressing housing issues that should be addressed as part of **re:code LA**.

While existing regulations may remain in place in many neighborhoods across the City, the new zoning code will also provide a series of new, flexible and innovative districts that effectively implement Community Plans, breaking down housing choice and affordability barriers.

Additional Reading

Housing Element 2013-2021

This bungalow court located near the intersection of Harvard and Martin Luther King is an example of just one of the unique housing options in LA.

2. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND DIVERSITY

2.1. Continue to Provide Incentives for Affordable Housing: Keep providing a density bonus as well as reduced parking, lot width and setbacks for development that includes affordable housing.

2.2. Minimize the Displacement of Core Transit Ridership: Redevelopment, conversions and major rehabilitation threaten the stock of rent-stablized housing where many transit riders live.

2.3. Provide a More Prescriptive Set of Housing Options: The zoning code should contain prescriptive standards for a more comprehensive menu of housing typologies.

2.4. Improve Regulations for Second Units: New regulations for second units must be developed and incorporated into the zoning code.

2.5. Enhance the Design of Small Lot Subdivisions. Revise the Small Lot Subdivision ordinance to require a higher level of design and improved compatibility with neighboring properties.

2.6. Remove Barriers to Micro-Housing: In areas with higher land values, such as near transit, micro-units help to provide an affordable housing option.

2.7. Improve Options for Shared Housing Communities: Modify density restrictions for cohousing projects in specific zones.

2.1. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Keep providing a density bonus as well as reduced parking, lot width and setbacks for development that includes affordable housing.

In 2008, the City adopted an ordinance to implement the state density bonus requirements (CA Gov't. Code Sec. 65915) to increase affordable and senior housing that allows up to a 35% increase in project density. The ordinance established additional incentives, such as flexible parking requirements, reduced lot width and setbacks and offers increased lot coverage.

The City should continue to offer a density bonus as well as reduced parking, lot width and setback requirements, for residential developments that include units affordable to very low-, low- or moderate-income households.

Although State law allows only modest improvements to the existing density bonus provisions (often referred to as SB 1818), the Department should explore revisions to the Zoning Code that could result in a net increase in the production of affordable units.

Additional Reading

Density Bonus Ordinance

To promote affordable housing near transit, the zoning code permits an increase in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for commercially-zoned properties within 1,500 feet of a rail station or a rapid bus stop.

2.2. MINIMIZE THE DISPLACEMENT OF CORE TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

Redevelopment, conversions and major rehabilitation threaten the stock of rent-stablized housing where many transit riders live.

Many Transit-Oriented Districts (TOD's) across the City include substantial housing stock that is inhabited by core transit riders today. The majority of transit riders in Los Angeles are low income or very low income individuals. During development in transit corridors and nodes, every attempt should be made to ensure that development does not reduce transit ridership. A common pattern is that as transit is added, housing gets more expensive. Wealthier residents move into the neighborhood, often pricing out existing core transit riders, vehicle ownership becomes more common, and transit ridership is actually reduced in spite of increases in density.

A policy focused on ensuring that core transit riders are not displaced as new development occurs is an appropriate component of many Transit Neighborhood Plans ("no net loss"). Where current policy direction has been established, the new zoning should incorporate mechanisms that require the inclusion of affordable units for transit riders, where legally allowed.

The rent-stabilization provisions (applied to those buildings with 2 or more units) do not apply to any units built after 1978. The City needs to ensure that existing per-1978 rent-stabilized units are retained in the future.

Unfortunately, there are a variety of ways rent-stabilized units are lost:

- Redevelopment
- Conversion to condominiums
- Major rehabilitation

Other strategies for retaining and increasing housing that is affordable should also be explored. Where the City is involved in a legislative process (such as rezoning), or a discretionary approval process (such as a variance or conditional use permit), the City may include requirements for affordability. Unfortunately, in those cases where the development occurs within the existing zoning, there is no existing requirement for the retention of rent-stabilized units.

Tenant relocation plans are typically only required of discretionary review projects, or as part of the environmental review process. This means that tenant relocation is rarely addressed in projects occurring within the existing rules. Consideration should be given to requiring relocation plans for all development (whether discretionary or by-right) in areas near transit and where ridership may be lost to relocation.

"No net loss" policies ensure that core transit ridership is not displaced by new development.

Transit ridership displacement and tenant relocation are rarely addressed within the existing rules.

2.3 PROVIDE A MORE PRESCRIPTIVE SET OF HOUSING OPTIONS

The zoning code should contain prescriptive standards for a more comprehensive menu of housing typologies.

The current zoning code doesn't do a great job at differentiating between the variety of residential building types that could be built in a given zone. The lot dimensional standards for a residential structure (height, yards, lot area, lot width and lot coverage) are set generically for all building types that could be built in any given zone. For example, RD1.5 allows one- and two-family dwellings, apartment houses and multiple dwellings, all of which currently have the same dimensional standards. This is in part why the Small Lot Subdivision ordinance was created, to allow improved options and greater flexibility for a variety of building types that could be placed on the lot.

A more prescriptive approach would set different lot dimensional standards for each building type permitted within the same zone. Different rules would be created depending on the building type proposed. For example, reduced side yards and smaller lot widths could be allowed for townhomes or rowhouses, although a standard lot width and side yard would be required for single-family detached houses. Another benefit of this approach is that specified building types could be restricted to certain neighborhoods depending on existing character and context, or planned future character. This would help ensure a variety of building types that all work well together to create more compatible and functional neighborhoods. There are great existing examples of many of these building types already on the ground in Los Angeles, providing a great catalog of building types.

The City of Portland recently developed an Infill Design Toolkit. The document provides a guide for infill development in established neighborhoods that focuses on a variety of housing prototypes. It is only a guide, but it provides good insight into what a comprehensive menu of housing typologies might look like.

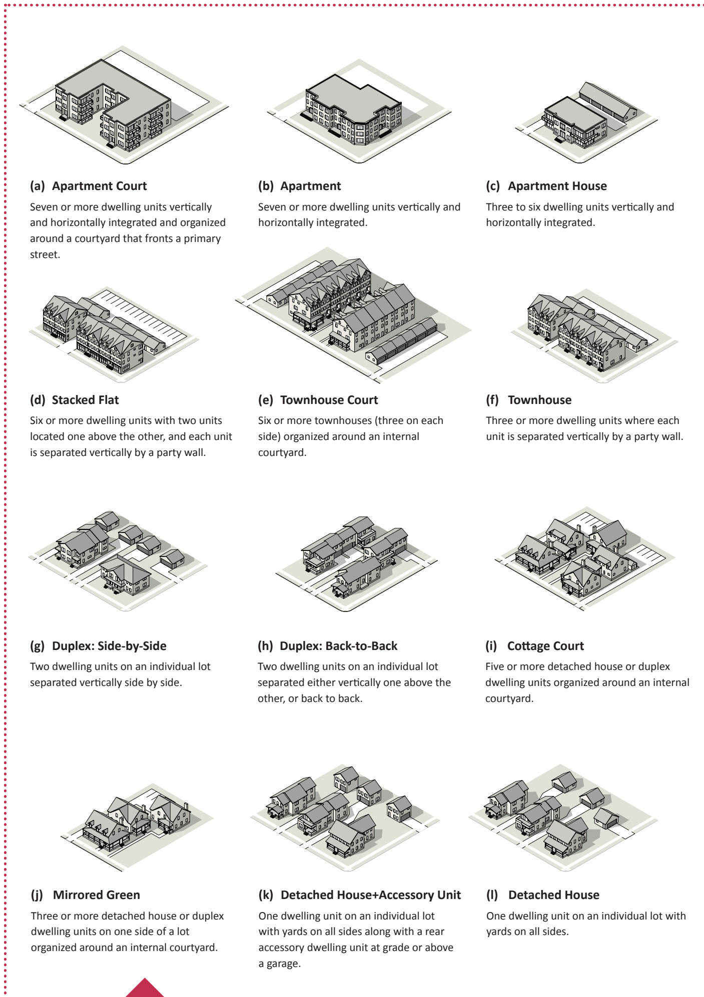
The City of Tuscaloosa recently adopted new zoning for neighborhoods devastated by a large tornado. The new zoning includes prescriptive standards for a variety of new housing typologies developed specifically for the heaviest-hit neighborhoods.

Concerns about the prescriptive nature of the regulations can often be addressed by providing an option for discretionary design review for buildings that do not fit the standards.

Additional Reading

Portland Infill Design Toolkit

Tuscaloosa Mixed Use Code



Tuscaloosa recently adopted zoning that includes prescriptive standards for a variety of new housing types.

2.4. IMPROVE REGULATIONS FOR SECOND UNITS

New regulations for second units must be developed and incorporated into the zoning code.

Second units (accessory apartments, in-law suites or granny flats as they are also known) are an important source of affordable housing. By promoting second units, LA could ease the rental housing deficit, maximize limited land resources and assist low and moderate-income homeowners with supplemental rental income.

State law (CA Gov't. Code Sec. 65852.2) enacted in 2003 requires that all California municipalities allow second units by right in single-family and multi-family residential zones. The law establishes standards for second units that all cities must follow unless they adopt their own specific standards (which are not allowed to conflict with specifically identified standards in the law). A municipality may apply quantifiable, fixed and objective standards, such as height, setback and lot coverage requirements to help ensure second units are compatible with existing structures in the neighborhood.

In 2009, the Planning Department began an effort to develop initial standards tailored to Los Angeles. However, the initiative was never completed. Consequently, second units must meet the state-adopted rules. This has made it difficult to build second units on existing lots. Second units must meet setback, lot coverage, passageway and height requirements that are really intended for principal units. Also, due to the general nature of the State requirements, no compatibility requirements exist and units as large as 1,200 square feet have been built in settings where they are out of scale and character with the neighborhood. As part of **re:code LA**, new regulations for second units should be developed and incorporated into the zoning code.

As part of re:code LA, new regulations for second units must be developed and incorporated into the zoning code.

Additional Reading

Back Yard Homes

2.5. ENHANCE THE DESIGN OF SMALL LOT SUBDIVISIONS

Revise the Small Lot Subdivision ordinance to require a higher level of design and improved compatibility with neighboring properties.

The small lot ordinance allows for a series of single-family homes on small lots to be built in an existing multi-family zone. These homes have separate foundations, no shared walls (although they are often very close together), and are situated on individual lots.

To allow small lot subdivisions, the definition of a "lot" was amended to specify the underlying zone's 20-foot lot frontage requirement does not apply. Parking requirements were also changed: projects are not required to provide parking on-site, but must still provide 2 spaces per unit, and guest parking requirements are reduced. Lots are not subject to side yard setbacks, meaning units can abut each other (side-by-side) and the typical 10-foot passage requirement does not apply.

There are several reasons why small lot developments are beneficial. Since they allow for individually-platted lots, homeowners own the house as well as the land, which means a condo association is not needed. Small lot development does not increase allowable density. In fact, it is common for small lot development to build out at densities below those allowed for apartments on the same site. They also provide a compatible transition when abutting lower-scale neighborhoods.

Recent amendments have focused on cleaning up procedural issues related to the platting process.

As of December 2013, approximately 39 projects (361units), have been constructed using the small lot option, a number that will likely increase over time if recent applications are any indication.

The Small Lot Subdivision ordinance has been very controversial, and implementation has been challenging for both developers and residents. First, the ordinance lacks a clear set of prescriptive standards to help ensure the houses relate appropriately to the street and to neighboring development. The concepts in the Small Lot Design Guide (recently prepared by the City) should serve as the starting point for the preparation of new zone standards.

In many instances, the base zoning does not match the development pattern on the ground; neighbors are surprised to see a single-family house replaced with four or five small-lot homes. The best solution for this issue is to replace the base zone with a better match for the underlying development pattern (typically after an updated Community Plan).

It is also difficult to apply the current standards citywide. Creating standards more specifically calibrated to particular parts of the City may help. Tailoring parking to reflect the availability of transit options will help promote small lot development in targeted areas.

cullen-street-homes-by-modative-architects

The Cullen Street Art District Homes shown above were developed as three separate homes on three individual lots.

Finally, the City should create a new zone that allows for similar design and intensities, while limiting the building types to those that serve as a useful transition. This new zone would provide one more tool for implementing Community Plans.

Additional Reading

Small Lot Design Guidelines

Small Lot Handbook

2.6. REMOVE BARRIERS TO MICRO-HOUSING

In areas with higher land values, such as near transit, micro-units help to provide an affordable housing option.

For many Angelenos, the oversized house with its unmanageable mortgage has lost its appeal. At the same time, people are remaining single, living alone or choosing not to have children for longer periods of time. This shift has led the way for a rise in popularity of very small self-contained homes called micro-units. These micro-units have everything needed in them (bathroom, kitchen and sleeping and living space) all within a space no bigger than 300 square feet. These types of smaller units appeal to young, single professionals who want the convenience of living in areas such as Downtown or near transit and might not be able to afford a conventional one-bedroom apartment. Micro-units are already a reality in San Francisco and New York, and many Angelenos no doubt live in even smaller spaces.

While the Building Code may be the biggest obstacle to micro-units, density limitations can also restrict the application of micro-units. Micro-units get penalized under a system that specifies a maximum number units per acre or a minimum lot area per unit. This is problematic in a regulatory system like that in Los Angeles, where there are very few limitations on the number of people who can live in a conventional house or apartment. Should the City regulate whether there are 4 people living in one 1,200 square foot apartment versus 4 people each living in a 300-square foot micro-unit in the same building? The impact on aesthetics, City services and existing infrastructure would be the same.

Since density is no longer a factor regulating development in the Downtown zones, there should be no restriction on micro-units Downtown. In areas where density regulations apply, such as near transit, micro-units could help to provide a more affordable housing option if bedrooms or some other measure of density applied (rather than dwelling units per acre) so that micro-units were on equal footing with larger apartments.

Another micro-unit model worth considering is the tiny house. Tiny houses are very small single-family detached units that are small enough to easily fit in a residential backyard as a second unit. The relatively low height and modest size reduce their impact on neighbors.

Micro-housing might not be appropriate everywhere, but should be considered an important component of the future affordable housing discussion in Los Angeles.

Additional Reading

Micro-housing

Micro-units have everything needed, often in a space no bigger than 300 square feet.

Tiny houses are very small single-family detached units that are small enough to easily fit in a residential backyard.

2.7. IMPROVE OPTIONS FOR SHARED HOUSING COMMUNITIES

Modify density restrictions for cohousing projects in specific zones.

Cohousing is a type of collaborative living arrangement where residents actively participate in the design and operation of everyday living. Cohousing communities are usually designed as a group of attached or detached single-family homes clustered around shared common area. Cohousing communities range in size from about 20 to 40 households. Common area becomes the social center of the community, with shared dining, kitchen, lounge and recreational facilities, children's spaces, and frequently a common garden, guest facilities and laundry room. Communities usually serve optional group meals at least two or three times a week.

Cohousing tends to conjure up images of a happy but homogeneous group of people—middle-class, highly educated, and culturally similar. However, this is not always the case—there are many cohousing communities that are populated by a combination of single parents, working-class families, seniors and students. Successful homeless shelters and affordable housing complexes have been built using cohousing principles. Cohousing is intrinsically an affordable model: one of its main purposes, outside of a strong sense of community, is limiting resource consumption by sharing resources. Cohousing members also have a tendency to live in smaller units that are right-sized for their lives.

Zoning barriers are very similar to those for micro-housing. Density restrictions can pose a barrier. However, cohousing is often designed with the intention of lessening the impact on the environment, therefore mitigating some of the negative effects of density. For example, some cohousing communities adopt measures to reduce waste, share cars, use renewable energy systems, collect rainwater, recycle wastewater and grow food. The City should consider reducing or eliminating density restrictions for cohousing projects in preferred zones that implement similar mitigating measures.

Mandatory parking requirements can also be a barrier to shared housing. The cost of a cohousing development could be significantly reduced if the parking ratio is "right-sized" based on the location and the demand for the development.

Some cohousing units don't have their own kitchen and use only the shared kitchen. The zoning code should rethink how to effectively accommodate dwelling units without kitchens and would likely consider them rooming houses or single-room occupancy units, which are sometimes perceived negatively.

Eco-Village is a shared housing community located in the north end of the Wilshire Center/Koreatown.

Additional Reading

Los Angeles Eco-Village Co-housing website

Cohousing can be designed to lessen the environmental impact of increased density.

3. CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

Rethink commercial corridors and centers to focus on providing accessible and healthy environments to live, work, play, learn and thrive in.

The creation of a vibrant and sustainable community requires a variety of uses—commercial, civic/institutional and office uses—all within walkable proximity of a diverse array of types of residential units. Whether dining out, getting milk or dropping off dry cleaning, conventional developments often force residents to drive out of their neighborhood whenever they are in need of basic goods and services. In LA, people spend a lot of time in their cars driving from place to place. In fact, the region's roadways are the 2nd most congested in the nation. A commuter in the LA region spends approximately 61 hours delayed in traffic annually. Only the Washington DC metro area, home of the nations most congested roads, where a commuter spends approximately 67 hours delayed in traffic annually, is ranked worse.

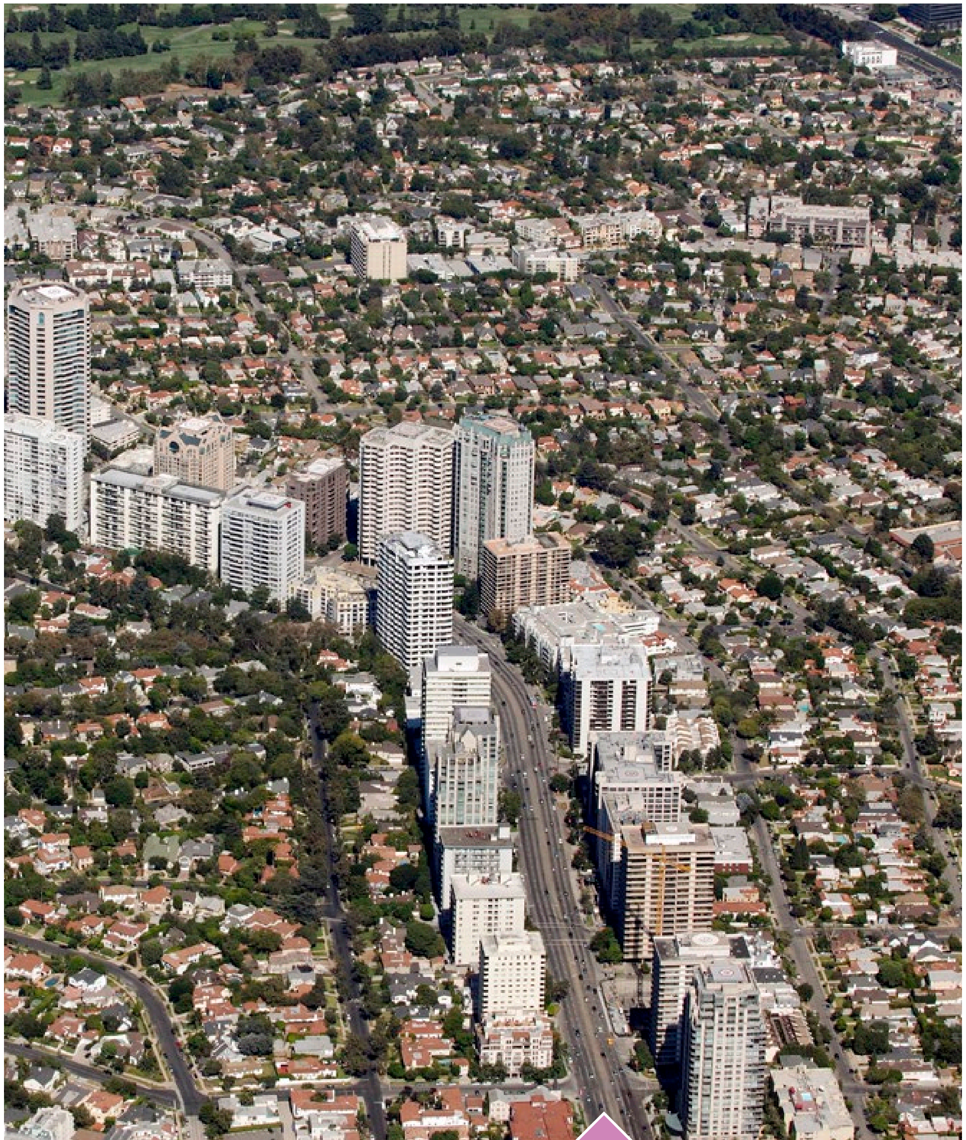
If LA is serious about its commitment to sustainability, then the zoning code must provide options to get people out of their cars and into alternative forms of transportation such as on foot, on a bike or catching a train or bus. One way to do this is to rethink the built environment and change the rules that result in auto-dominated, single-use areas into rules that promote and encourage walkable, mixed use places.

Mixed use comes in many forms—it may be in the form of a corner store in the neighborhood, a co-working space for people who sometimes telecommute during the week, a compact area with a variety of uses, or a vertically mixed use building with restaurants or retail on the ground floor and residential or offices above.

In LA, mixed use occurs in the full variety of forms and intensities. Downtown has the most intense, mixed use development, while other areas may take the form of mid-rise or low-rise developments around outlying growth centers or transit corridors. The new zoning code must acknowledge this and provide rules for this variety of settings. The new zoning code must also handle established auto-commercial corridors, and provide clear development standards that enhance the overall quality of development in centers and corridors. The City must rethink its rules for commercial centers and corridors with a focus on providing accessible and healthy environments for its citizens to live, work, play, learn and thrive in.

Additional Reading

LA Times Article: Traffic congestion in U.S. remains steady; LA area is second-worst



Wilshire Boulevard is not your typical commercial corridor. Running 15.83 miles from Grand Avenue in Downtown to Ocean Avenue in Santa Monica. Wilshire Boulevard is densely developed throughout most of its span. Many of the post-1956 skyscrapers are located along Wilshire.

3. CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

3.1. Improve Base Zoning Options for Commercial Corridors: New commercial zones must be developed that address the variety of character that exists today, but are flexible enough to grow with the needs of the City.

3.2. Require Enhanced Walkability and Form Standards: In order to create a mixed use, pedestrian-friendly environment with a balance of mobility options, the typical approach to zoning must be reconsidered.

3.3. Expand and Improve the Approach to Commercial Corners: The mini-shopping centers and commercial corner development rules should be replaced with citywide standards that apply to all commercial development.

3.4. Provide Enhanced Standards for Landscaping: Improve the citywide landscaping standards to respond to LA's climate and provide standards for transitions.

3.5. Integrate Sign Types and Design Standards with the New Zoning Structure: Ensure that signs reinforce community character, while serving their business and communication objectives.

3.6. Consider Improved Options for Design Review: Clarify the authority for and applicability of existing design guidelines, enhancing their effectiveness; move standards to the zoning code.

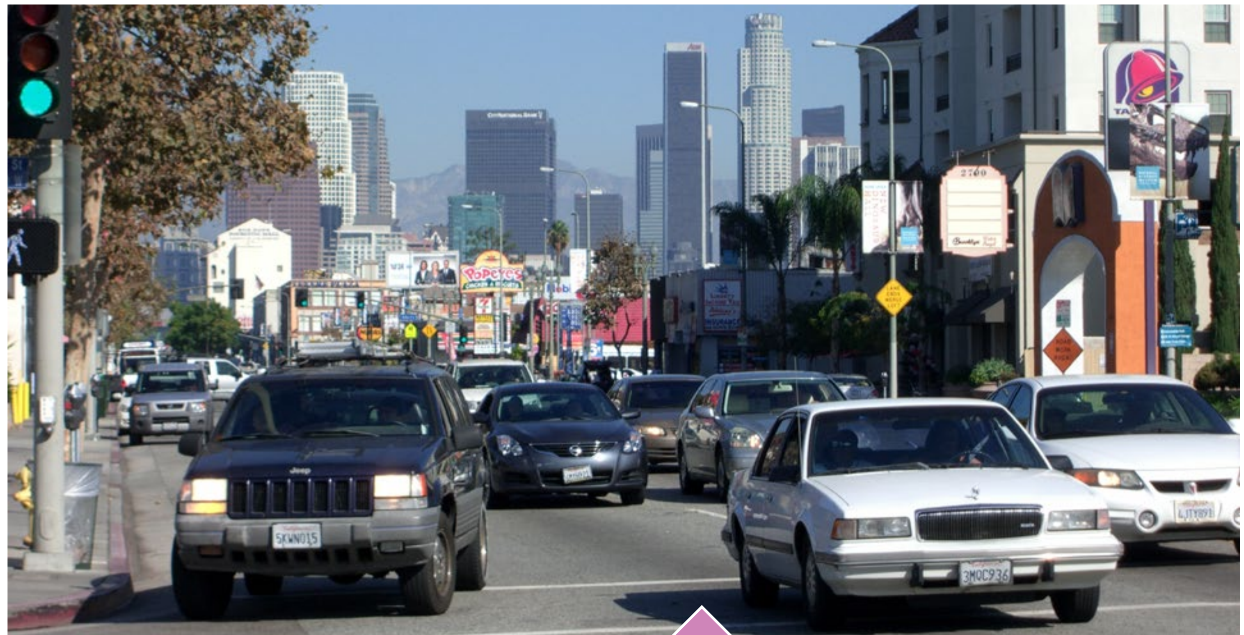
3.1. IMPROVE BASE ZONING OPTIONS FOR COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

New commercial zones must be developed that address the variety of character that exists today, but are flexible enough to grow with the needs of the City over time.

Single use, single-story strip malls along commercial corridors are a common sight in LA. Totally automobile-dependent, known for their surface parking lots and inefficiency in the use of land, strip malls generate more pollution and consume more in the way of precious land resources than do mixed use, walkable places.

C2 is the most common zoning along the City's commercial corridors. Of all commercially-zoned land (CR, C1, C1.5, C2, C4 and C5) in the City, 66% is zoned C2. This suggests that the City relies too heavily on C2 zoning for its commercial areas.

No community is "one size fits all" and commercial zoning shouldn't be either. Under the current base zoning, C2 along Figueroa is the same as C2 along Van Nuys. In reality, the conditions in these two parts of the City are very different and may require a distinct set of rules. The new zoning must provide the right tools for each location. To a certain extent, the City already understands this—over time, the City has changed the single type of base zoning by using a series of patchwork fixes. These include a variety of overlay districts, specific plans, and Q, T and D conditions applied at the time of a zone change.



Under the current base zoning, C2 along Figueroa is the same as C2 along Van Nuys. In reality, the conditions in these two parts of the City are very different and therefore require a distinct set of rules.

New commercial zones must be developed that successfully address the variety in character thats exists today, but are also flexible enough to grow with the needs of the City over time. If new zones effectively address this variety in character, they will improve the connection between the City's planning/design goals and zoning, which will also reduce the need for time-consuming customized zoning solutions. Rather than a set of "one-size fits all" zones with a variety of overlays and conditions, new base zones must address the existing and future needs of all commercial areas in the City.

3.2. REQUIRE ENHANCED WALKABILITY AND FORM STANDARDS

In order to create a mixed use, pedestrian-friendly environment with a balance of mobility options, the typical approach to zoning must be reconsidered.

The existing zoning code is based on a Euclidean zoning model. Euclidean zoning is fundamentally about keeping uses apart (separating industry from homes). However, to accommodate a modern city such as LA moving toward a more mixed use, integrated and pedestrian-friendly environment, the typical approach to zoning must be reconsidered.

If LA were to approach mixed use by simply allowing a broad range of uses from single-family to industrial in a single zone without any sort of additional regulation, the odds of getting a high-quality, walkable, mixed use environment are slim. Allowing a broad range of uses must be balanced with the appropriate level of design regulation. In a vibrant, mixed use area, buildings are pulled up to the street, ground floor windows are transparent, parking is structured or to the rear of buildings, sidewalks are wide, and streets are narrow. These fundamental design elements are what contribute to the sense of place and the walkable vitality of an area. Design is regulated using basic elements of good urban form as the mechanism to help ensure a certain quality of place is achieved. More specifically, this approach regulates elements that directly affect the way a building and street function, to encourage pedestrian activity and a mixing of uses. The focus is on building placement, parking location, windows and doors, as well as the public realm (sidewalks, street trees and on-street parking).

With proper controls on form, a greater mix of uses can become natural and comfortable. Use is not ignored, but can be more loosely regulated using broader parameters with better ability to respond to market economics, while also managing socially or environmentally undesirable uses. In short, a more form-driven approach to zoning is an effective way to translate desired outcomes into the zoning that will help implement future planning efforts and improve the overall quality of commercial development.

The design and urban form concepts found in the citywide residential and commercial design guidelines should be the starting point for the preparation of new zone standards.

Additional Reading

re:code LA Article: Types of Zoning

Form-Based Codes: A Step-by-Step Guide

Residential Citywide Design Guidelines

Commercial Citywide Design Guidelines

Walking is encouraged by the right relationship between the building and the street, and by active ground-floor uses, street trees, and on-street parking.

3.3. EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE APPROACH TO COMMERCIAL CORNERS

The Mini-Shopping Centers and Commercial Corner Development rules should be replaced with citywide standards that apply to all commercial development.

The Mini-Shopping Centers and Commercial Corner Development Ordinance (Zoning Code Sec. 12.22.A.23) was created in response to the mini-mall phenomenon that swept the City in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Originally inspired by the loss of corner gas stations, hundreds of mini-malls popped up at busy intersections across the City. The real estate was cheap and the spread of the mini-mall was fast: one developer built 5 mini-malls each month at the height of this trend.

The rules were intended to ensure that mini-mall projects provided for such things as neighborhood compatibility, landscaping, signs, trash enclosures and storefront windows. While the rules exempt mini-malls from the minimum 10-foot front setback required in the CR, C1 and C1.5 zones, they do not require new buildings to be pulled up to the street (creating a pedestrian orientation). Buildings were frequently built to the rear of the lot, with parking in between the building and the street. The result is that the adjacent sidewalks are not friendly for pedestrians, and the street edge is dominated by cars.

Also, the rules only apply to a limited number of places, specifically those projects that meet the definition of "commercial corner development" or "mini-shopping center." As a result, a large number of commercial corridors are not subject to these additional requirements for neighborhood compatibility, landscaping, signs, trash enclosures and storefront windows.

One of LA's many Mini-Shopping Centers featuring parking between the building and street, and the kind of signs required to attract vehicles, as opposed to pedestrians.

Following the adoption of many Community Plans, the City has modified the commercial zoning with special rezoning conditions and overlays that encourage higher quality commercial development. However, these rules are also applied only in specific portions of the community.

Instead of these narrow rules that apply only to commercial corner developments and mini-shopping centers, the new zoning code should include standards that apply to all commercial developments.

Additional Reading

LA Times Article: The men behind the Southern California mini-mall

3.4. PROVIDE ENHANCED STANDARDS FOR LANDSCAPING

Improve the citywide landscaping standards to respond to LA's climate and provide standards for transitions.

To help ensure functional and attractive commercial areas that serve as positive assets to the residential communities they border, the commercial zones (and to a certain extent the multi-family and industrial zones) should include enhanced standards for landscaping.

Landscaping improves the appearance, character, and value of property. The correct placement and arrangement of landscaping can have a substantial effect on the environment, both in terms of reducing the heat island effect, as well as reducing the quantity and improving the quality of stormwater runoff.

The current landscaping requirements are confusing because they are not found in the zoning code and don't include the Landscaping Ordinance/Guidelines, a supplemental document which contains the majority of the requirements for landscaping. To find the Landscaping Ordinance/Guidelines, a separate web search has to be conducted. Once you find them, it is not clear whether the Landscaping Ordinance/Guidelines are mandatory or not.

Neither the zoning code nor guidelines address water-efficient landscaping approaches appropriate in LA's climate. The City adopted the State maximum outdoor water use standards; however, they are not integrated with the landscaping provisions.

A related component of landscaping is the use of low impact development (LID) stormwater management techniques, which often include bioswales and other "best management practices" (BMP's) that are vegetated. Lower density portions of Los Angeles that offer substantial open space as part of every development are perfect candidates for a low-impact approach.

For landscaped areas to be sustainable in the long-term, they should provide a wide variety of species which are well-adapted to the local climate. This would minimize the impacts of disease and drought, while also promoting greater diversity of other species, such as insects and birds. It can encourage improved health and prolonged plant life by placing each species in the appropriate setting. It can also reduce the maintenance cost associated with pruning and replacement.

Unlike most typical zoning codes, LA's landscaping provisions do not contain buffer requirements. Typically, buffers are required between zones or uses that otherwise would be considered incompatible neighbors, and the requirements are in the landscaping rules. In land use planning, there is a hierarchy of uses based on relative impacts from single-family to industrial. Established single-family areas are almost always protected to some degree from abutting higher intensity residential or commercial uses or districts (typically a buffer is required to be planted by the higher intensity use). A set of buffer options should be added to the landscaping section that specifically prescribes requirements for such things as buffer width and planting requirements. At minimum, buffers should apply when higher intensity residential or commercial uses abut established single-family residential neighborhoods.

In urban settings, buffers often take up valuable land, create barriers to pedestrian movement and increase the distance between complementary uses. Buffers should be developed that accommodate a range of settings including constrained urbanized areas such as Downtown, where landscaping is not always the best solution to compatibility.

Additional Reading

Landscape Ordinance/Guidelines

City of LA: Low Impact Development Manual

3.5. INTEGRATE SIGN TYPES AND DESIGN STANDARDS WITHIN THE NEW ZONING

Ensure that signs reinforce community character, while serving their business and communication objectives.

Signs are an important form of communication, and a contentious land use issue. From the iconic Hollywood sign to the Victor Clothing's historic Pope of Broadway mural in Downtown's historic core, signs are a memorable feature of the City's design fabric. Well-designed signs announce that the City is open for business, provide important information, and can even add to a sense of place. However, chaotic sign clusters, excessive scale and illumination, signs in the wrong places, and poor sign design can create a blighting influence, degrade neighborhood quality of life, and impair traffic safety. With its trend-setting status in the media, Los Angeles has also confronted the newest sign techniques such as supergraphics and digital displays. Neighborhoods have legitimate interests in protecting their character, while businesses need signs to attract customers.

Facing pressure from both sides, the City has worked hard to craft regulations that balance business and civic communication needs with the community's safety, aesthetic and character objectives. Currently, these regulations are found throughout the City's zoning and building codes. Article 4.4 of the zoning code provides general, comprehensive sign regulations. This divides signs into broad, structural categories such as monument, projecting, wall, canopy, pole, roof, window and marquee signs. The regulations address the size, height, location, and physical characteristics of each sign. The City's building code addresses sign construction and permitting. However, some zones include additional sign regulations, and sign

Iconic signs in Hollywood and the Downtown Core help to provide a sense of place.

controls are supplemented through Specific Plans, development agreements, and supplemental use districts. One supplemental district–the "SN" Sign District–provides a way to establish special sign regulations in parts of the C or M zones, R5 zones (where designated in a Community Plan as a "Regional Center," "Regional Commercial," or "High Intensity Commercial,"), or within any redevelopment project area. One example of a Sign District is the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District. This augments the general sign regulations with specific sign types such as architectural ledge signs, open panel roof signs, pillar signs, and skyline logo/icon signs.

A clutter of temporary signs actually reduce the effectiveness of other signs on the site.

While the City's sign regulations are comprehensive, they are scattered throughout the various ordinances, plans and special regulations. Subject to California or State law implications, this project presents an opportunity to update the sign regulations to:

» Improve Graphics and Readability. The current sign regulations have few graphics. Several graphics are found in the Appendices to the sign regulations, but they are highly technical, difficult to read, and disengaged from the text. The new sign regulations should consider providing graphics side-by-side with the text.

» Expand Sign Typology. The general sign regulations have very broad sign categories. However, there are many categories of signs based on their design, location, materials, type of illumination (if any), and production types. The Hollywood Sign District does a good job of presenting sign categories and providing visual examples. This approach would allow the new zoning code to distribute signs by district in a way that better matches each community's unique character.

» Link to Community Character. The sign standards contain no distinction between auto- and pedestrian-oriented signs. The City should consider linking sign standards to the character and form of development. For example, pole signs might not be allowed in walkable, mixed use areas. In addition, the sign standards should tie more closely to district typology. For example, monument signs are now limited to 8 feet in height regardless of district or character area. While specific plans and sign districts can adjust this standard, this sometime occurs on a case-by-case basis. The new zoning code should consider adjusting dimensional standards in a way that dovetails with the district structure, with smaller signs in pedestrian and transit-oriented districts, and larger signs in auto-oriented locations.

3.6. CONSIDER IMPROVED OPTIONS FOR DESIGN REVIEW

Clarify the authority for and applicability of existing design guidelines, enhancing their effectiveness; move standards to the zoning code.

The City currently administers several sets of design guidelines that extend the standards of zoning to guide quality development. Guidelines are a well-established component of development review in LA, and serve as an excellent way to convey community goals. Existing guidelines include the citywide design guidelines for residential, commercial and industrial development, the Downtown Design Guide, the Small Lot Design Guide, as well as a variety of guidelines embedded in Community Plans, Specific Plans and zoning overlays.

In many cases, these design guidelines are used in an advisory fashion, as guides to inform new development and encourage property owners to meet a certain quality of development, without requiring them to do so. When guidelines are applied as part of a discretionary approval (such as a zone change), they can be more effective, since they often become a condition of development.

The City should consider improved options that strengthen the effect of existing design guidelines. The future applicability of all design guidelines should be clarified. It is not currently clear which projects are subject to review using the design guidelines. Who conducts design review is also not very clear in the existing code.

It is important to establish a common vocabulary when discussing how design is regulated. Two key terms that are essential to differentiate are standards versus guidelines. Design standards are prescriptive requirements that must be met. They are measurable and quantifiable, such as a minimum setback or maximum height. Design standards should be included in the zoning code. A proposed project must meet all standards that apply, or seek a variance if there is a hardship created by the standard.

Design guidelines are a more discretionary tool for determining the attributes of a proposed development. Design guidelines are often qualitative, and offer flexibility in the way in which they are met. Design guidelines allow balancing of various design principles in the guidelines and consideration of the intent of a requirement when judging whether the guidelines have been met.

Applicants sometimes argue that because they are termed "guidelines," they are simply suggestions. While many communities apply advisory guidelines (the applicant must listen to comments, but is not required to act on them), LA should strive for more effectiveness in the new zoning code.

Design guidelines should be incorporated in the zoning code by reference. The framework for design review (the powers and roles of decision-makers, and how decisions are appealed) should be defined in the zoning code, along with basic criteria that serve as the foundation for the guidelines. With this framework in place, the City can require compliance with design guidelines.

Given a clear connection between zoning and the design guidelines, both review and compliance can be mandatory. In the alternative, where either conditional review occurs, or when an applicant volunteers to access a zoning incentive, guidelines could be applied as enforceable requirements.

One common frustration with guidelines that are developed generically (such as citywide systems), is that there are inevitably some guidelines that are simply not applicable. A common resolution is to ensure that development, "reasonably meets all relevant guidelines."

To be an effective design review system, conflicts between zoning standards and design guidelines must be eliminated. Zoning should be used to determine what uses are allowed, and how high a building is, and where it can be placed on a site. ***Design guidelines should control only those elements of design that don't affect the basic entitlement, but relate to the quality of the urban design, architecture and landscape architecture.***

Review bodies should be allowed to consider whether materials and design options presented by an applicant are "equivalent or better" than the requirement in the Code. For example, this concept could be used to approve a new type of electric vehicle charging station. Use of this concept ensures that the Code does not become out-of-date as new materials and design approaches are introduced over time.

Design review processes should never be forced to use "compatibility" or similarly undefined concepts to eliminate specific uses, or modify key elements of the entitlement such as total floor area. This job should be done through clear standards in zoning that are applied prior to design review.

Applying design guidelines requires judgment in determining compliance. Therefore, the clarity with which guidelines are written, illustrated and administered is very important. A number of the design guidelines associated with recent Community Plans include a mix of prescriptive standards and discretionary guidelines. Terms like "should" and "recommended" are found alongside mandates like "shall," "required" and "must."

The format of the Community Plan design guidelines varies widely. Unlike the City's HPOZ guidelines and the citywide guidelines, which follow a rigorous model, the Community Plan design guidelines and those found in overlay districts are organized in a variety of ways. Many provide no real hierarchy of information, nor do they reflect either the steps in the design/development process, or the distinct design disciplines involved. This makes it challenging for the outside user to get what they need in a brief review of the document.

There are many elements currently found in design guidelines that could appropriately located in the zoning code as standards. These elements should be transferred to the new zoning code. An effective reconsideration of the existing guidelines would account for:

» Universal elements that can be moved to the zoning code as prescriptive standards.

» Varying levels of design review, and an effective set of appeal and interpretation provisions.

» A hierarchy of design review based on the location of standards in Citywide Guidelines, Community Plans, Specific Plans, and zone-specific guidelines.

» A basic structure for guidelines at all levels to follow, in order to provide consistency and rigor to the system.

Overall, design guidelines work best when they serve as an extension of the standards in the zoning code.

Additional Reading

Residential Citywide Design Guidelines

Commercial Citywide Design Guidelines

Industrial Citywide Design Guidelines

Crenshaw Corridor Design Guidelines and Standards

Washington Boulevard Design Guidelines

4. TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

Provide mobility choices that balance the needs and safety for all modes of transportation.

Los Angeles is a widely diverse City, but a common theme shared by many Angelenos is their preoccupation with the automobile. In a City that covers around 500 square miles, with numerous hubs of employment, commerce and entertainment, LA residents spend a lot of time driving from Point A to Point B. Many parts of the City have evolved over the past 50 years into an auto-oriented environment, with numerous freeways and arterials that facilitate movement throughout the City. Getting from Point A to Point B can almost always be achieved a variety of different ways, and the best way to get from Los Feliz to Venice can spark a lively debate. LA's most iconic locations are not so much the neighborhoods, but their thoroughfares. Sunset, Ventura and Santa Monica boulevards are frequently referenced in songs and movies. A wide boulevard lined with palm trees is one of the most recognizable and iconic LA images.

All major U.S. cities have freeways, but LA's have taken on almost mythical qualities. Highways 101, 405, and 110 are among the best-known in the world, and each has its own personality. Angelenos often refer to their freeways, as though they were referring to an old friend (or a sworn enemy). Residents and visitors alike have experienced the joy of cruising the City when traffic is light, and the frustration of wasting precious minutes in traffic when it is not.

LA consistently ranks as one of the most congested cities in the country. Often considered the poster child for car-oriented cities, LA once boasted one of the world's best public transportation systems in the early 1900's.

The gridlock plaguing Southern California has reached a tipping point, with the region spending a total of 3 million hours sitting in traffic each year. Desperate for a way out of traffic, Southern California residents have recently shown a willingness to support alternatives. In 2008, Los Angeles County voters approved a half-cent sales tax increase to fund public transit improvements. Measure R, which received a convincing 67% of the vote, indicated a commitment to improve mobility options in the region, moving past the auto-centric policies of the past 50 years, and toward a richer, more comprehensive public transportation system.

Bicycling is seeing a resurgence all across the country. CicLAvia is one great local example of this renewed interest, with 3 events planned in 2014 that will connect communities and give people a break from the stress of car traffic.

Finally, last December, Mayor Garcetti committed to create additional "Great Streets" in the City. This intriguing new effort pulls together staff from a variety of City departments, including Planning, to prepare a strategy for identifying streets to be included, a candidate list of potential streets, a matrix of project elements and associated costs, and an implementation timeline, funding strategy and metrics to evaluate project impacts. The first selected streets will be announced soon.

Many Angelenos spend a significant amount of their daily lives in traffic on the area's free-ways and major arterials.

4.TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

4.1. Rethink Zoning Around Transit Stations: The new zoning code should contain tools to successfully implement transit-neighborhood planning efforts.

4.2. Prepare a Comprehensive Set of Street and Block Standards: New street and block standards that enhance the link between transportation and land use must be included in the zoning code.

4.3. Rightsize the Code's Approach to Parking: Required parking can be a significant development constraint, and the new zoning code provides the opportunity to study and comprehensively fix the requirements.

4.1. RETHINK ZONING AROUND TRANSIT STATIONS

The new zoning code should contain tools to successfully implement transit-neighborhood planning efforts.

The LA region is poised to make a significant investment in public transit, as evidenced by Measure R and the 30/10 Initiative. The 30/10 Initiative will achieve 30 years worth of improvements in a mere 10 years through accelerated construction of key regional transit projects. The following projects are scheduled to be completed within the next 10 years:

- East San Fernando Valley North-South Transit Corridors
- Sepulveda Pass Transit Corridor
- Westside Subway Extension
- Regional Connector Transit Corridor
- Gold Line Foothill Extension
- Exposition Transit Corridor Phase 2
- Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor
- Eastside Transit Corridor Phase 2
- Green Line LAX Extension
- South Bay Green Line Extension
- West Santa Ana Transit Corridor

In order to help ensure enough people live near transit (especially rail and bus rapid transit) to fully utilize the system, it makes sense to allow for increased density options around transit stations and bus-rapid transit corridors. A transit-oriented development, or TOD, is typically a higher intensity development located within walking distance of a public transit stop. Walking distance for transit is generally defined as a 5 to 10 minute walk or ¼- to ½-mile in distance. As gas prices rise and commute times increase, more and more households may want higher-density housing options near transit.

TOD is more than a good financial investment. It is also a more sustainable development pattern, and can create a higher quality of life for residents. By increasing density around transit, fewer car trips are needed, fuel consumption is reduced, and the air is cleaner for residents to enjoy. TOD's can reduce traffic congestion, commute times and overall transportation expenditures. A TOD is also an opportunity to provide mixed-income housing. Affordable housing, parks and other public benefits can be funded through density incentives for new construction.

The LA region is poised to make a significant investment in public transit. A number of rail and bus line improvements are scheduled to be completed in the next 10 years.

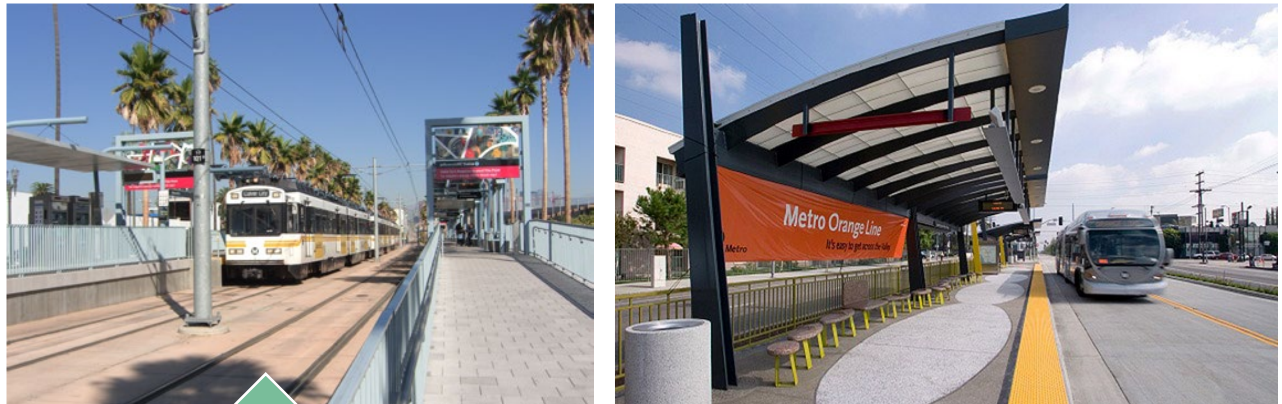
The City recently received a $4.5 million Metro TOD grant to fund planning work around 14 new and existing transit stations along several of the City's transit lines, including the future Downtown Regional Connector, the Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley, and the Purple Line along Wilshire Boulevard. The grant is in addition to a 2012, $3.1 million Metro grant to complete station area plans for the Crenshaw/LA Line and Expo Line Phase 2.

The new zoning code must take advantage of this significant focus on public transit and include specific zoning requirements for development within close proximity to public transit. Densities in the code should be tied to the robustness of transit. Densities around subway and light rail should be greater than bus-rapid transit corridors, which should, in turn, should be greater than conventional bus routes.

In TOD's, particularly along major corridors, creating a diverse mix of uses should be emphasized. This might include allowing a base density, with bonuses for mixed use development.

To help ensure that core riders continue to use the system, the City should consider increased density, paired with incentives and other programs, to create and preserve affordable housing opportunities.

In LA, the floor area allocation system drives density, and parking impacts the ability to produce floor area. Eliminated, reduced or modified parking ratios should be considered in transit areas, to put more efficient use to land than parking. Where possible, parking should be "unbundled" from rent or sales, allowing owners to sell or lease spaces to others, if they fail to lease or sell them to building occupants.



Major rail and rapid bus improvements will enhance the ability of residents to get between home and jobs.

New TOD zoning should learn from the concepts in other existing plans, such as the Vermont Western Station Neighborhood Area Plan (SNAP). The new zoning code options should be more appealing to both developers and neighbors, encouraging the use of the new zoning code, rather than custom zoning for each separate location.

The new zoning should seek to protect and enhance small business opportunities around transit stations.

Zoning for station areas and bus-rapid transit corridors must feature walkability, paying special attention to the interface between buildings and the street. The goal is to get more people walking and get them walking further distances by creating interesting and inviting places. TOD's should place buildings close to the sidewalk, and parking between the building and street should be banned, relegated to the side, rear, or in structures, where appropriate.

Maximum building lengths should be considered in station areas on major corridors, with pedestrian connections to break down the scale and encourage multiple pedestrian routes. Streets and blocks should be well connected and an emphasis should be placed on ensuring that streets accommodate a variety users: motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Both the Downtown Design Guide and the Warner Center Specific Plan propose solutions to break up existing large blocks.

Additional Reading

TOD Preservation Study

First Mile/Last Mile Study

Downtown Design Guide

Warner Center Specific Plan

4.2. PREPARE A COMPREHENSIVE SET OF STREET AND BLOCK STANDARDS

New street and block standards that enhance the link between transportation and land use must be included in the zoning code.

As LA re-stripes its streets, the City is taking the opportunity to include improved bike and pedestrian facilities.

Planners and engineers across the country are working hard to create streets for everyone, and reform the practice of designing streets solely for use by automobiles. Complete streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from rail stations.

As of 2011, the California Complete Streets Act requires cities and counties making substantive revisions to the circulation element of their General Plan to plan for complete streets.

An update to the General Plan's Mobility Element is currently underway. One of the primary goals of the update is to implement a balanced transportation system using complete streets standards that ensure the safety and mobility of all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. The Mobility Element also aims to prioritize the implementation of bicycling and pedestrian safety improvements around community facilities and locations with a strong presence of pedestrians. The new zoning code must contain the tools necessary to implement the Mobility Plan's recommendations once it is adopted.

The City should be commended for its continued commitment to complete streets; however, the standards in place today pay little attention to creating streets that accommodate a variety of transportation choices. Currently, LA regulates street design outside of the zoning code, through separate policies and manuals. Current cross-sections do not account for bicycle lanes, on-street parking or street tree planting. There is little about the current rules that advocates for complete streets.

New street dimensional standards are being prepared as part of the Mobility Element. Downtown also has a recently prepared set of street standards. To enhance the link between transportation and land use, these new street standards must be included in the zoning code.

Street connectivity is an important element when thinking about good placemaking and urban design. Connectivity refers to the directness of travel routes between any two locations, and the number of alternative routes available for traveling between any two locations. Connectivity in turn affects the environment, air quality, health and other quality-of-life issues.

Digital graphic design tools provide the opportunity to illustrate street cross-sections in a realistic way.

There is a direct correlation between the walkability or bikeability of a place and the level of overall connectivity. Creating better connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists can improve an area's vitality and sense of place, reduce traffic congestion, and improve public health. An interconnected street network absorbs and diffuses traffic, rather than concentrating it. High connectivity reduces emergency response time. Vital public and private services, such as postal, sanitation and transit service can also be delivered more efficiently. Variety, choice and convenience to the traveler are provided through the opportunity to use multiple routes, and air quality is improved through reduced trip lengths and the reduction in vehicle emissions.

The current zoning code does not adequately address connectivity, from either a pedestrian/bike perspective or an automobile perspective. For example, the subdivision design standards states "blocks shall not exceed 1,700 feet in length, except in hilly areas." However, a more appropriate block in a walkable, mixed use setting in LA would be between 500 and 700 feet in length. (It is no accident that places originally designed for pedestrian movement, such as Downtown LA, have blocks in this range. Further, long block lengths force traffic onto fewer streets, resulting in the need for a network constructed primarily of wide arterial streets that inherently are not pedestrian- or bicycle-friendly.

Different parts of the City demand different levels of connectivity, and this should be addressed in the zoning code. By placing reasonable limits on the size and length of blocks, overall connectivity is increased. As the block face distance shortens, the permeability (and therefore efficiency) of the street network increases.

Additional Reading

Mobility Element 2035

Mobility Element website

Complete Streets Manual

Downtown Street Standards

4.3. RIGHTSIZE THE CODE'S APPROACH TO PARKING

Required parking can be a significant development constraint, and the new zoning code provides the opportunity to study and comprehensively fix the requirements.

Parking was a significant topic of discussion during the focus group interviews and the public listening sessions, particularly in relation to Downtown and near to existing or proposed transit stops.

People have varying opinions on transportation, traffic congestion and parking. Some believe that traffic congestion can only be addressed by increasing requirements for off-street parking, while others claim that increasing the parking supply will simply lead to more trips, and therefore increase congestion. What is true, however, is that the availability and cost of parking influences an individual's choice to drive, walk, bike or take public transit.

Parking requirements represent a powerful tool for shaping the character of a city. For roughly 50 years, zoning codes across the country have included minimum requirements as a means of mitigating the impact of parking demand on public streets. This has created number of unwanted side effects, including:

» Reducing the viability of reuse of existing buildings

» Limiting options for development on smaller lots or awkwardly-shaped sites;

» Discouraging alternatives to automobiles (by promoting an overabundance of parking, alternatives like walking, cycling, transit and car-sharing are at a distinct disadvantage);

» Eroding pedestrian environments by increasing the proliferation of land devoted to the automobile, creating large swathes of inhospitable surface parking lots; and

» Adding to the cost of living, since the cost of providing minimum required parking is passed down to the consumer in the price for goods, services, and housing, creating an unfair burden for those who do not drive.

LA has recently made a couple of big changes with regard to parking. First, the Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP) that was recently approved includes no minimum parking requirements. This is a big change from the conventional approach in LA, where each use must provide enough on-site parking to match its anticipated demand. The CASP approach may not be an approach that could be applied citywide, but it is an interesting experiment and is something that should be watched carefully to see how it affects the viability of redevelopment overtime. If successful, this approach should be applied in other areas through area planning efforts such as Community Plans or Specific Plans.

Secondly, in 2012, the City approved the Modified Parking Requirement District Ordinance, or MPR as it is better know. The MPR allows for the creation of a special parking district that allows the following parking modifications:

» If a building's use changes, even if the new use has a higher parking ratio, the parking requirements stay the same;

» Buildings can move parking off-site, if it is located within 1,500 feet;

» Modified parking requirements for the entire district can be established;

» Individual projects can request fewer required parking spaces on a case-by-case basis;

» Maximum parking limits can be established (each use within a district has a set maximum number of spaces), but parking above the maximum if the development meets certain provisions; and

» Parking requirements may be satisfied through the creation of a parking credit program.

For a neighborhood to create an MPR, it must collect signatures of at least 75% of the owners or lessees of property within the proposed district.

The MPR is a step in the right direction and includes a number of approaches that might have broader applicability citywide.

Another effective strategy for addressing parking concerns in a given area is through the creation of a parking management district. A parking management district, similar to an MPR, is a tool that can be applied to a specific area, such as Downtown or a transit station area. A parking management district could also allow modified parking ratios, but a parking management district is more focused on generating and collecting parking revenues that are then funneled back into the area where they are collected (from fees-in-lieu, taxes, parking meters or municipal parking lots or structures). These funds can be used to finance parking-related improvements, such as the construction of shared parking structures.

Some of the parking standards in the zoning code need to be modified:

» Shared parking and on-street parking should be allowed as flexible ways to meet parking requirements.

» The parking ratios for all uses should be reevaluated. Parking ratios should be tailored to context within the City, and availability of transit should be considered, especially in mixed use, walkable areas such as Downtown.

» In Downtown and transit station areas, parking should be "unbundled" from rental or for sale prices, allowing new tenants to pay only for the parking they feel is needed. Building owners should be allowed to sell or lease spaces to others if they fail to lease/sell them to building occupants.

» The application of maximum parking requirements near transit stations should be studied.

» All the provisions for required parking should be easily located in the zoning code, preferably all in one place.

» Provide standards for automated (mechanical) parking systems, unbundled parking and shared-valet services.

» The listed uses in the parking section should match the list in the use section.

» Specific loading requirements should be removed. Only loading space design standards should be retained.

The current regulations recognize that it may be difficult to meet the parking provisions, and therefore allow staff some discretion to reduce parking requirements in certain settings. A more universal method for negotiating parking requirements would allow applicants to submit an alternative parking plan. An alternative parking plan allows an applicant to submit data that justifies a reduced number of required parking spaces, or shows how an applicant proposes to meet their current parking requirement in alternative ways (such as valet parking, or using transportation demand management techniques such as van pooling or car share).

In summary, the current approach to parking across the City should be reevaluated in light of contemporary development trends. Parking ratios should be more responsive to context and the availability of transit, without significantly impacting surrounding residential areas.

Bike parking is another important topic. In 2011, the City approved the updated Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan which documents the plans, methods, and goals of the City to improve its bicycle infrastructure. The City currently has a bike parking ordinance that requires new development to provide permanent spaces for the parking of bicycles. The City also has a Bikeable Design Toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to provide a set of design recommendations to help create bike-friendly development in Los Angeles. The bike parking ordinance should be refreshed as part of the **re:code LA** effort.

Additional Reading

Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP)

Modified Parking Requirement District Ordinance

Bikeable Design Toolkit

Bicycle Master Plan

5. JOBS AND INNOVATION

Retain jobs and attract industry to strengthen Los Angeles as a global center for employment and innovation.

The General Plan Framework states that the City of Los Angeles must "actively ensure that the City has sufficient quantities of land suitable to accommodate existing, new and relocating industrial firms." It also suggests limiting the conversion of existing industrial land to other land uses to avoid creating "a fragmented pattern of development [that] reduces the integrity and viability of existing industrial areas."

Los Angeles, as is true of many modern cities, is losing industrial acreage to both fragmentation and alternative uses. Some of the challenge lies in the modest value of many industrial areas, and their appealing large-scale, open floor plan buildings, which attract uses as varying as churches, indoor trampoline parks, and artists of all kinds. Some industrially-zoned areas have been almost completely overwhelmed by retail uses (for example, Canoga Park or West LA near Olympic and Sawtelle).

The Mayor's office and Planning Department have been working to protect industrial land since 2003, including studying the issue (Los Angeles' Industrial Land: Sustaining a Dynamic City Economy, 2007), and issuing new staff direction in 2008.

In 2007, the industrial sector in Los Angeles employed one-quarter of the City's total workforce and created an estimated $219,000,000 annually in City tax revenue-more than 410,000 persons were employed in the industrial sector.

As recently as 2007, 26% of Los Angeles' industrial land was already used for non-industrial purposes, leaving just 6% of the City's total land area available for active industrial uses.

In the 2007 Industrial Land Use Study, the industrial lands studied were separated into four categories:

Employment Protection. Revise the zoning, address land use incompatibilities, address the interface between industrial/employment areas and adjacent neighborhoods.

Industrial Mixed Use. Provide new amenities, establish design regulations, but allow for introduction of a broader mix of uses, although still primarily industrial.

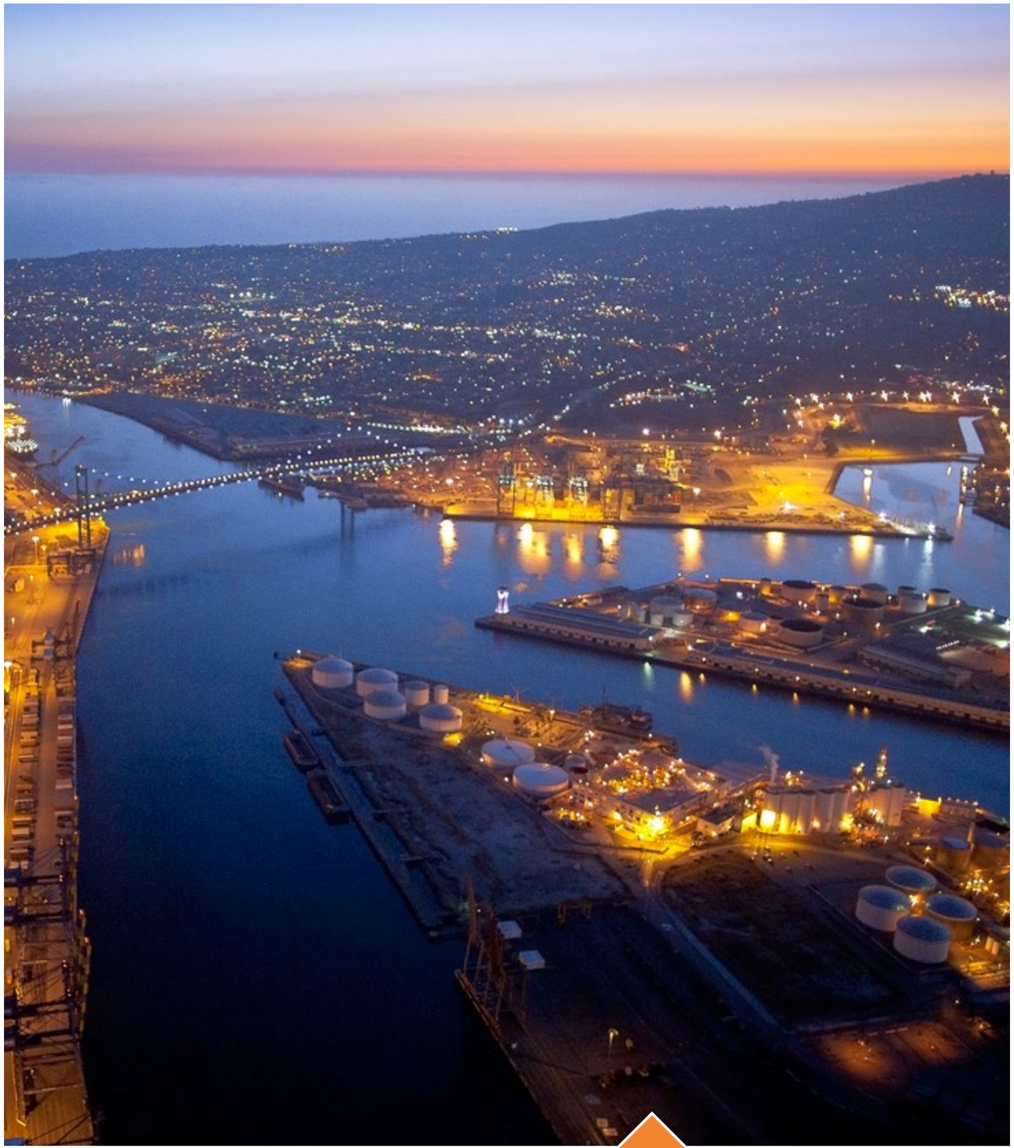
Transition. Anticipate conversion, especially to TOD; prohibit heavy industrial uses.

Correction. Land use conversion has already taken place, need correct zoning for existing uses.

These concepts remain valid today.

Additional Reading

2007 Industrial Land Use Study



The Port of LA is a significant industrial presence, generating jobs and spin-off activity.

5. JOBS AND INNOVATION

5.1. Create Industrial Sanctuaries to Meet Future Employment Needs: Preserve job opportunities by revising the existing zones to help ensure available land for industrial, manufacturing and distribution purposes.

5.2. Prepare New Industrial Zones to Implement Community Plans: New industrial zones that reflect the changing needs and character of industrial areas are needed.

5.3. Rezone Industrial Land Only Where Necessary: Rezone industrial land only where corrections are needed and where industrial land is designated as being in transition in a Community Plan or Specific Plan.

5.4. Enhance the Jobs Housing Balance: Increase the number of jobs in close proximity to housing.

5.1. CREATE INDUSTRIAL SANCTUARIES TO MEET FUTURE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

Preserve job opportunities by revising the existing zones to help ensure available land for industrial, manufacturing and distribution purposes.

It is difficult to retain industrial uses where financial pressure from allowed retail, stand-alone office and residential uses extends into existing industrial areas. Thinking specifically about those industrial areas designated by the City for retention, it is important to restrict incompatible uses that drive land costs for industrial users up.

MR1 and MR2 are the most restrictive existing zones with regard to allowed uses, but they apply to about 12% of all industrially-zoned land. These zones were created in 1974 to protect industrial uses, but have not been applied to enough land area to meaningfully impact retention of industrial land.

The more common M1 and M2 zones apply to 41% of all industrially-zoned land. These zones continue to allow "any enclosed C2 use," creating competition by industrial users for land sought after for retail and office purposes.

In order to achieve true industrial protection, a more restricted use list must be applied to those properties with existing industrial uses intended to be protected.

The existing industrial zones are one example of where the "cascading" or "pyramidal" approach to regulating use (allowing the uses from a previous zone, and then adding a few new uses) leads to frustration for the average code user. For example, the M1 Zone allows any use permitted in the MR1 Zone and any use permitted in the C2 Zone. When the user turns to the C2 Zone, it allows any use allowed in the C1.5 Zone or C1 Zone. Turning back to the C1 Zone, it allows any use in the CR Zone. The user of the code must review the use lists from 5 other zones to find all of the allowed uses for the M1 Zone. Flipping back through the zoning code to determine whether a proposed use is allowed should be remedied in by providing a comprehensive allowed use table.

An example of poor screening and transition between industrial and residential uses.

While industrial uses are acceptable neighbors for other industrial uses, in many cases a use at the edge of an area with industrial zoning requires landscaping or screening to protect adjacent non-industrial development from dust, noise, glare and other impacts of the industrial use. This is the concept of a zone boundary buffer.

At present, only some specific uses require a buffer or screening (found in the General Provisions of Section 12.21). In fact, many public benefit projects (such as cemeteries, libraries, etc.) require a minimum 10-foot landscaped buffer, and yet most industrial uses do not.

A consistent approach to buffering or screening industrial uses from adjacent zones by applying a zone boundary buffer should be added to the zoning code. In general, enhanced standards for all industrial zones should be developed. The Industrial Citywide Design Guidelines should be the starting point for preparing new zone standards.

Additional Reading

Industrial Citywide Design Guidelines

5.2. PREPARE NEW INDUSTRIAL ZONES TO IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY PLANS

New industrial zones that reflect the changing needs and character of industrial areas are needed.

Various Community Plans have struggled with the concept of new hybrid or mixed use industrial zones. These zones would be used in areas where some industrial uses remain viable and are expected to linger into the future. However, portions of the industrially-zoned area may be appropriate for commercial, mixed use or residential use.

One example is the Arts District area of Downtown, intended to allow for artisans and residents to commingle with remnant industrial uses, creating a new kind of industrial area.

Once a planning process such as a Specific Plan or Community Plan designates an existing industrial area as appropriate for transition, a new zone or zones should be available in the zoning code to accommodate the change.

Industrial zones that are intended to transition clearly require a broader list of allowed uses than the traditional M zones, which should focus on industrial protection.

Uses that may cause health hazards or otherwise make poor neighbors due to their impacts should be placed in industrial sanctuary zones.

New zones should be in alignment with "Clean Up Green Up." Clean Up Green Up is a community-based, City-supported initiative, aimed at reducing and preventing pollution in three LA communities—Boyle Heights, Pacoima and Wilmington.

The addition of residential uses in these areas may be appropriate, especially where former buildings lend themselves to renovation for residential use.

New industrial zones that allow for a broader range of uses will need additional measures to ensure compatibility among uses. If outdoor storage yards are allowed, for example, then these new zones must provide for screening of those outdoor areas.

In addition, if commercial or residential uses are allowed, then amenities related to those uses must be required in the new zones, including pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, on-site open space and on-street parking.

Additional Reading

Green Up Clean Up website

As some industrial areas start to allow for a broader range of uses additional amenities will be needed, including pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, on-site open space and on-street parking.

5.3. REZONE INDUSTRIAL LAND ONLY WHERE NECESSARY

Rezone industrial land only where corrections are needed and where industrial land is designated as being in transition in a Community Plan or Specific Plan.

In many parts of Los Angeles, conversion of industrially-zoned areas has already occurred (for example, in Pocoima). Where this condition exists, efforts should be taken to correct the situation by rezoning the land to a zone more appropriate for the underlying use. In many cases, this will be a commercial zone.

Select industrial areas have already been determined to be obsolete in various planning processes, and conversion of these areas has begun to take place. Where Community Plans or Specific Plans suggest transition (zone change) is appropriate, industrial zoning should be changed to more appropriate non-industrial zones or new industrial zones.

re:code LA may include some strategic map changes (see page 6)

This recently-built shopping center is a redevelopment of a former manufacturing facility and is a prime example of the conversion of industrial land to a higher-performing retail use.

5.4. ENHANCE THE JOBS HOUSING BALANCE

Increase the number of jobs in close proximity to housing.

There are many ways in which existing zones could allow more jobs close to housing.

Home Occupations. Most small business start-ups occur in someone's home (or garage!). These businesses may remain modest in scale, embedded within the neighborhood, or they may successfully grow until they exceed the capacity of the home and move to new space elsewhere. Some modernization of the home occupation standards may be appropriate. These changes could occur in specific zone, or with additional review in all zones. Some consideration of expanded options in larger lot and agricultural settings or hybrid industrial settings may also be appropriate, where impacts are likely to be contained on the property.

Home-Based Businesses. The conservative nature of the City's existing provisions for home occupations discourages entrepreneurs that might otherwise successfully run a business from their home. The City should consider an option allowing applicants to exceed the thresholds for number of employees or expand the use list following a public hearing on the proposed home-based business. While this option is not appropriate for all portions of the community, it should be a part of the toolbox of options in the new zoning code.

Live/Work. In many communities, live/work units (in which a single owner has space physically configured for both commercial and residential use) have become a popular incubator of small businesses. The model typically accommodates two distinct versions – a loft space in which both activities occur in the same space; or an upstairs/downstairs or front/back configuration with a separate unit for working and another unit for living. Allowing modest amount of "work" to occur in these settings, especially craft, artisan and similar modest-scale businesses is an excellent way to move up from a home occupation. In some cases, it also provides an easier mortgage option for owners.

Business Incubator, Coworking. A business incubator or coworking space is typically a facility that provides support for growing businesses, including shared space, accounting and human resources support, along with business planning help. These facilities are intended to grow start-up businesses to the point where they can stand alone and make their way in the marketplace without support. Clarifying where those uses are allowed would help encourage this growing trend.

Mixed-Use Buildings. Another way to move toward a balance of jobs and housing is to focus on mixed-use projects, including both vertical mixed use (in the same building) and horizontal mixed use (in adjacent buildings). Intensifying single-story commercial or industrial areas to allow for residential uses in upper stories, especially where served by transit, can provide a winning combination of added density within the City, along with jobs and housing in close proximity.

Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan. The recently adopted specific plan for the Cornfield Arroyo Seco area approached industrial protection by selecting specific blocks to be placed in a new zone (Urban Innovation) that restricts commercial office, retail, personal services, multi-family, and hotel to a portion of the building floor area in order to allow industrial uses to be included. Nearby, specific blocks are allowed to transition to residential uses in the new Urban Village zone. All of the land in both zones lies in a generalized land use category called Hybrid Industrial, which may be a useful way to integrate residential and industrial uses in other parts of the City.

Additional Reading

Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan

6. A STRONG CORE

Retool Downtown regulations to create a dense, livable pattern of development that supports a vibrant daytime and nighttime economy.

From the 1950's up until the turn of the century, the suburbs offered a more comfortable lifestyle, away from the hustle and bustle of the inner-city. Suburbs offered a higher quality of life, with access to better schools, more affordable housing with less traffic, and safer neighborhoods.

Since the turn of the century there has been a shift. Younger generations are re-investing in a fashion that suggests that living in the suburbs with more house than they care to maintain and commuting to work farther than they care to drive is not for them. They would much rather live in a compact, walkable neighborhood with a smaller house and yard to maintain. At the same time, a significant portion of the younger generation is looking to live in a location with little or no commute, with a nearby coffee shop and a dog park across the street. For these people, sense of place and quality of life is what it is all about.

Downtown LA isn't quite the lively, fully walkable, mixed use place everyone wants quite yet, but it's definitely getting there. For some time now, Downtown has been characterized by half-empty office buildings and quiet streets. Lately, things are changing, a new generation of city dwellers, business owners, developers and elected officials are creating a more livable Downtown.

In 1999, the Los Angeles City Council passed an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, making it easier to convert outmoded, vacant office and commercial buildings into renovated lofts and luxury apartment and condo complexes. This ordinance contributed significantly to the resurgence of Downtown. As of 2009, 14,561 residential units were created under the ordinance, leading to an significant increase in Downtown residential population.

The Staples Center, which opened in 1999, has also contributed significantly to the revitalization of Downtown, adding 250 events and nearly 4 million visitors per year to the neighborhood. Since the opening of the Staples Center, the adjacent LA Live complex was completed, which includes the Nokia Theatre and the Grammy Museum.

Today, Downtown is a diverse residential neighborhood of some 50,000 people. During the day, an influx of workers swells the population to more than 200,000. As a measure of recent success, Whole Foods plans to open a Downtown store in 2015. However, for Downtown to become a place where residents have access to quality affordable housing, groceries, exemplary schools and easily accessible recreational space, changes to the Downtown zoning code must occur.

A unique opportunity is presented by the current updates occurring to the Central City and Central City North Community Plans. It is common for zoning changes to occur based on newly-adopted plans, providing Downtown with both up-to-date planning and new zoning for plan implementation.

Today, Downtown LA is a diverse residential neighborhood of some 50,000 people. During the day, an influx of workers swells the population to more than 200,000.

6. A STRONG CORE

6.1. Make Downtown a More Complete Neighborhood: Improve safe and convenient access to goods and services needed by Downtown residents on a daily or regular basis.

6.2. Revise the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance: Allow for retrofitting of uses other than residential and hotel, expand the concept citywide.

6.3. Rethink the Transfer of Floor Area (TFAR): Create true sending and receiving sites, rethink the public benefits desired.

6.4. Fix the Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Ordinance: Reduce the number of competing incentive programs trying to generate affordable housing.

6.1. MAKE DOWNTOWN A MORE COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD

Improve safe and convenient access to goods and services needed by Downtown residents on a daily or regular basis.

In a recent LA Times article, Downtown was noted as, "a neighborhood with an increasingly hip and well-heeled residential population." Its residential population has jumped to over 50,000, and there are currently over 5,000 residential units under construction. In the last 5 years, more than 450 new businesses have opened Downtown. "There's no other place in LA where we see so much transformation happening as quickly as we see it happening Downtown," said Councilman Jose Huizar.

A "complete neighborhood" is an area where residents have safe and convenient access to goods and services they need on a daily or regular basis. This includes a range of housing options; grocery stores and other neighborhood-serving commercial services; quality public schools; public open spaces and recreational facilities; and access to frequent transit. In a complete neighborhood, the network of streets and sidewalks is interconnected, which makes walking and bicycling to these places safe and relatively easy for people of all ages and abilities.

Downtown has many of these attributes listed above, however, it is missing some key ingredients. There is only one major grocery store (Ralphs), although Whole Foods has announced a Downtown store. There is also a City Target and a Smart and Final, but some people may not consider them major grocery stores.

Good access to public schools is another missing key element. For residents with elementary school-age children, choices within Downtown include the Para Los Niños charter school at Seventh and Alameda, Ninth Street Elementary at Towne and 9th, and the Metro Center charter school at 15th and Grand. As a result, many parents are forced to pay for private school or move out of Downtown altogether.

As the population of Downtown grows, the need for active recreation space is increasing. Apart from the State Historic Park adjacent to Chinatown, there are no other good public outdoor options for places to actively exercise.

The issues raised above are primarily planning-related, and can only really be addressed as a part of a comprehensive effort for Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Zoning will only play a limited role. However, if the City would like to actively promote grocery stores, public schools and active outdoor recreation space Downtown, then these elements could be part of a public benefits package that developers provide in exchange for an increase in floor area.

http://joe-urban.com

Ralph's at 9th and Hope is the only major grocery store Downtown today.

Apart from the State Historic Park, there are limited significant public outdoor options to actively exercise in or around Downtown.

6.2. REVISE THE ADAPTIVE REUSE ORDINANCE

Allow for retrofitting of uses other than residential and hotel, expand the concept citywide.

The Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO) was approved for Downtown in 1999. Based on its success, the City expanded the program in 2003 to cover parts of Hollywood, Mid-Wilshire, Koreatown, Chinatown, Lincoln Heights and Central Avenue. The ARO allows the reuse and retrofitting of vacant and underused buildings for residential purposes, including hotels. It has become one of the most significant incentives related to historic preservation in LA, facilitating the conversion of dozens of structures into new housing and hotels. The program was put in place to streamline the process, resulting in substantial time savings. The ARO relaxes parking requirements, density restrictions and other typical zoning provisions, and also includes fire and life-safety provisions specifically for older buildings. To date, more than 60 buildings in Downtown have been adaptively reused for a total of over 14,000 new units.

In today's improving economic climate, reuse has become more costly and most new residential projects in Downtown are ground-up construction. It has been almost 15 years since the inception of the ARO. The stock of easily-adaptable buildings has dwindled, and remaining buildings are too costly to improve or are not easily adaptable to residential or hotel use. It is time to update the ARO so that it aligns with current economic and development trends.

Since the ARO does not apply when converting to office or commercial use, the same zoning and life-safety modifications that apply to residential conversions do not apply, making the reuse for anything other than residential or hotel much tougher. The City should expand the ARO so that it applies to retrofits for office and other nonresidential uses.

One additional statement heard about the ARO is that to be eligible, a building must have been constructed prior to July 1, 1974 (25 years old as of the date of passage of the ordinance). However, a building constructed after July 1, 1974 remains eligible if it is at least 5 years old and the Zoning Administrator determines that the building is no longer economically viable for its current use. The new zoning code should clarify this test for economic viability. Rethinking the applicability date should occur as well (should it apply to all buildings over 25 years old, for example, rather than to a date certain?).

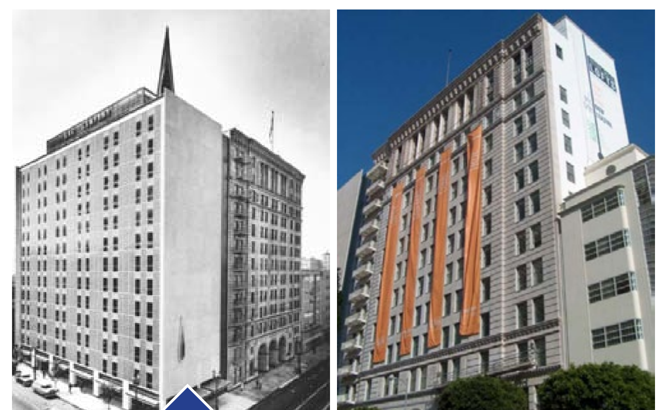
Under the ARO, the minimum size for a residential unit is 450 square feet, with an average minimum size of 750 square feet for all residential units in the building (these minimum don't apply to hotel rooms). The minimum size of 450 square feet should be reconsidered in light of the discussion of micro-units and their relationship with affordable housing (see page 25). The average minimum size should be deleted all together.

Consideration should also be given to a broader expansion of the ARO citywide. There is an administrative process that allows for adaptive reuse outside of the designated areas, but this is done on a case-by-case basis. For the most part, developers are unaware of this. An improved model should be developed to apply the ARO outside of Downtown and the 2003 expansion areas.

Additional Reading

[The Partnership for Building Reuse: Learning from Los Angeles]

[City of Los Angeles: Adaptive Reuse Program]



The Historic Gas Company Lofts were originally used as offices by the Southern California Gas Company, and were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

6.3 RETHINK THE TRANSFER OF FLOOR AREA (TFAR)

Create true sending and receiving sites, rethink the public benefits desired.

In 1975, under the now dismantled Community Redevelopment Agency, the first Central Business District Plan was prepared. The Plan was implemented in part by the Transfer of Floor Area Rights (TFAR) program. TFAR allows for the purchase or sale of development rights (FAR) from one site to another. By doing so, development rights are extinguished at the sending site and transferred to a receiving site.

In Downtown, the base FAR is set at either 3:1 or 6:1, depending on what height district the property is located in. Property owners with existing buildings that do not use all of their FAR (like the Convention Center or Central Public Library), or who intend to build less than their total FAR allows, can sell (or transfer) unused floor area. Conversely, developers who want to exceed the base FAR can buy floor area, or TFARs, and achieve a maximum FAR of 13:1 (or even greater using other options).

The Zoning Code regulates the process for approving transfers of floor area, which require the approval of the City Planning Commission, City Council, and Mayor. As part of the approval of any transfer of floor area rights, the current Code requires that payments be earmarked for the TFAR Public Benefit Payment Trust Fund, which is paid out to support the provision of public benefits either on public or private property.

As part of the **re:code LA** project, TFAR should be reviewed for revisions to make the program more efficient and effective. Public Benefit Trust Fund dollars should only be considered for physical development projects, and not to fund broader citywide policy efforts. With a new and improved transfer of development rights system, the City can explore the possibility of expanding this new tool to other areas, as appropriate.

The current extent of the TFAR is very undefined; essentially it encompasses all of the Central Business District as both a sending and receiving site. Best practice would define specific sending and receiving areas within a larger context such as Downtown, allowing for improved implementation of planning goals. This might mean identifying targeted growth centers (receiving areas) and places to be preserved (sending areas).

Additional Reading

TFAR report by Nicolas Zuniga

The largest TFAR transfer involved the Central Library, with 966,000 square feet transferred to the US Bank Tower.

6.4. FIX THE GREATER DOWNTOWN HOUSING INCENTIVE ORDINANCE

Reduce the number of competing incentive programs trying to generate affordable housing.

The Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Ordinance was established in 2007 to encourage the construction of affordable housing Downtown. The Ordinance applies between the 110 freeway on the west, the 101 freeway to the north, Alameda Street to the east and the 10 freeway to the south.

The ordinance eliminates density, reduces parking and yard requirements, and allows for up to a 35% increase in floor area in exchange for the provision of affordable units.

Since its inception, the Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Ordinance has not been well used. Although it has incentivized Downtown development, the number of affordable units constructed has not lived up to expectations. This may be due to the fact that there are too many competing incentives in Downtown (the main one being TFAR). The primary reason to use the Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Ordinance would be to gain the right to additional floor area. Why go to all the trouble of building and managing affordable units, when additional floor area can simply be purchased using TFAR?

The other incentives offered as part of the ordinance, such as the elimination of density and yard requirements, are not significant enough on their own to encourage affordable units. These incentives should apply to all development Downtown, regardless of whether affordable units are provided or not. The ordinance's parking reductions might encourage developers to apply, and should be kept.

The City should rethink the approach to affordable housing Downtown, and how it might function within the context of an updated approach to TFAR. An affordable housing component could be added to TFAR, replacing this ordinance. Other affordable housing measures for Downtown might include unbundled parking (see page 44), removal of the minimum unit size associated with the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (see page 55), and micro-units (see page 25).

The Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Ordinance was established in 2007. The ordinance eliminates density, reduces parking and yard requirements, and allows for up to a 35% increase in floor area in exchange for the provision of affordable units.

7. A HEALTHY CITY

Improve the community's health through greener, more resilient development.

For many years, Los Angeles was as well known for its smog-laden skies as for its other, more positive attributes. The City has come a long way in improving air quality. However, there remain a variety of long-term health impacts the City must address. The new zoning code project provides an opportunity to implement key concepts for a healthier City. Policy on this front is currently being developed as part of the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles.

Quoting the Plan's blog: "Los Angeles is among the first of cities nationwide to look at the relationship between community health and planning. There are vast disparities between neighborhoods in Los Angeles and where residents live often determines their health destiny. Low-income communities such as South Los Angeles and Boyle Heights face disproportionate rates of health issues such as obesity, asthma and violent crime. Geographic location is such an important indicator of health that a person born and raised in Watts can expect to live 12 years less than a person born and raised in Brentwood. With this effort, the City wants to improve neighborhood conditions so that every Angeleno has access to good health."

The Los Angeles River has long been a subject for film-making, its concrete form providing the backdrop for scenes of car chases, drag racing and even post-apocalyptic opportunities to save the world. Seldom is it been celebrated as a natural wonder. The recent efforts by the City and County to improve access to the River, and long-term efforts to remove at least part of the concrete, and expose the natural riverbed, are opening the eyes of Angelenos to what the River could become. The proposed River Improvement Overlay is one possible zoning measure in support of the recently-adopted Master Plan.

Finally, many communities discover that they have created barriers to new green technologies and concepts. An audit of the new zoning code to ensure additional barriers are not created for these concepts should occur before the code is considered complete.

Additional Reading

Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles

Health Atlas

Designing a Healthy LA

http://inhabitat.com

The SYNTHe Green Roof project in Downtown is planted with fruit trees, vines, herbs and vegetables.

7. A HEALTHY CITY

7.1. Implement the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles: Support Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles policies that envision making the healthy choice the easiest choice throughout the City.

7.2. Implement the LA River Master Plan: Ensure watershed-sensitive design and public access to the river in future development.

7.3. CEQA streamlining and Improvements: Carry over the transparency of the new zoning code to CEQA implementation.

7.4. Remove Barriers to Green Solutions: Remove barriers to new green approaches to energy production, stormwater management, landscaping and local food production.

7.5. Review the Standard Mitigation Measures for Improved Standards: Embedding these standards in the zoning code simplifies the CEQA review process

7.6. Other Environmental Issues - Parks and Fracking: New ideas for Quimby regulations, possible local regulation of fracking.

7.1. IMPLEMENT THE PLAN FOR A HEALTHY LOS ANGELES

Support Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles policies that envision making the healthy choice the easiest choice throughout the City.

The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles is a new health and wellness chapter currently being drafted. It will be added to the City's General Plan. The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles elevates health as a priority in the City's future growth and development, establishing a policy framework to make Los Angeles a healthier place to live, work and play. A draft of the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles will be available for public review in 2014. The guiding principles for building a healthy Los Angeles have already been released.

Some of the most important principles in relation to the new zoning code include:

» Recognize the link between community design and health

» Promote active transportation

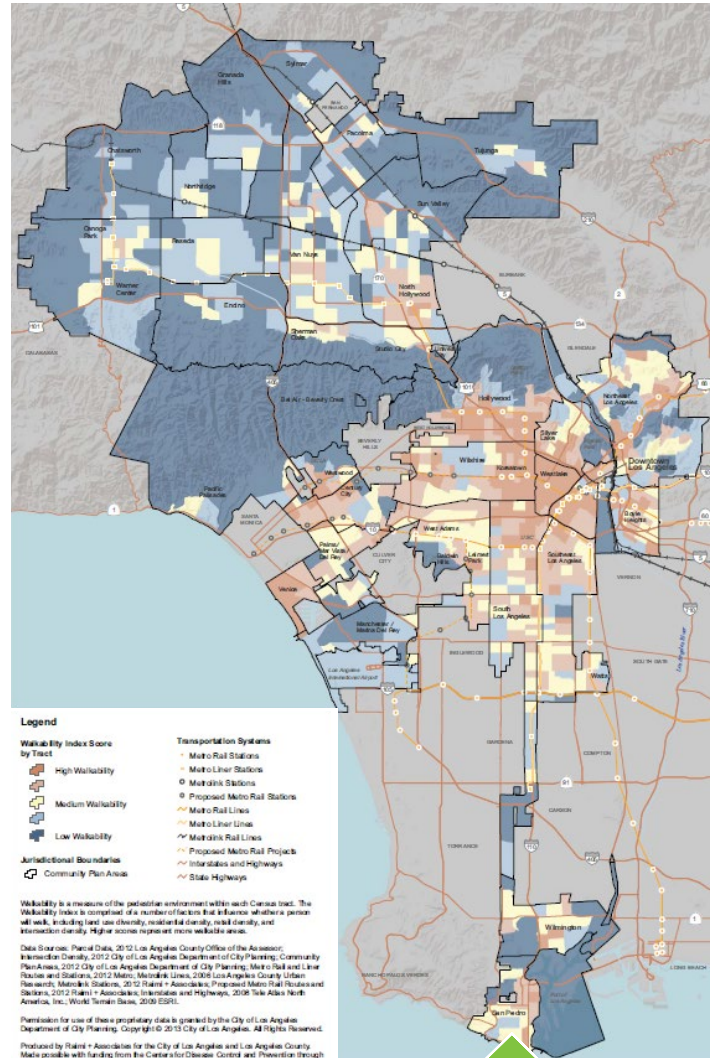
» Comprehensive economic development

» Provide healthy housing

All of these principles, and other more detailed objectives and strategies of the Health Plan can be supported in the new zoning code.

The Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles project has also produced a health atlas of maps depicting a variety of conditions related to health across the City. In many ways, this atlas should be considered a call to action in specific areas of the City with concentrations of health impacts. Future Community Plans must work to reduce the health impacts across the City, and increase the opportunity for healthy living, especially in the City's least healthy neighborhoods.

The zoning code, through its design standards, can create healthier places, with improved opportunities to walk, bike, and otherwise lead a healthy lifestyle.



Walkability Index Map, one of many maps from the Health Atlas for the City of Los Angeles that should influence the new zoning code.

7.2. IMPLEMENT THE LA RIVER MASTER PLAN

Ensure watershed-sensitive design and public access to the river in future development.

The Los Angeles River is situated within a highly urbanized watershed, and the success of any and all changes to the River channel—including greening, habitat enhancements, water quality treatments, and restoration activities—are impacted by both upstream and downstream activity in the watershed. Due to its function in draining the watershed, the Los Angeles River bears a disproportionate share of the responsibility for addressing region-wide problems, such as flood control, trash and debris collection, and absorption of the effects of contaminated urban runoff. In 2007, the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan was adopted by the City Council, establishing a blueprint for future revitalization of the River.

Key Plan policies include:

» Green the neighborhoods—Connect neighborhoods to the River with a network of green streets, sidewalks, and pathways, distinctive River gateways, signs, and artwork.

» Capture community opportunities—Foster a renewed, respectful River identity through watershed-sensitive design standards and land uses that help to strengthen neighborhoods.

The new zoning code must help the City implement the Master Plan, which encourages access to the LA River. As an initial step, the City has been hard at work on the River Improvement Overlay District (RIO).

The RIO is a new supplemental use district that establishes landscape, urban design and noise standards for all projects (by-right and discretionary) located within a RIO district. The RIO also establishes a process for the City Planning Commission to adopt River Design Guidelines for discretionary projects. The first RIO district is proposed along the Los Angeles River.

Additional Reading

Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan

RIO draft ordinance

In January 2013, the LA River was designated a real river (not just an irrigation ditch), protecting it under the Clean Water Act and guaranteeing public access. Image on the right is one vision of a reinvigorated, accessible river.

7.3. CEQA STREAMLINING AND IMPROVEMENTS

Carry over the transparency of the new zoning code to CEQA implementation.

CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act, is a state law that requires the City to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. CEQA informs decision-making. It is intended to mitigate impacts, not specify whether a project is good planning policy or quality development. But what if new community plans and a new zoning code delivered exceptional development? How would the Planning Department's application of CEQA help or hinder the process?

With new community plans and a new zoning code on the horizon, an opportunity exists to carry over the many benefits of those documents to an easily accessible, transparent and streamlined CEQA process.

The new zoning code will be user-friendly and web-accessible, and the Planning Department's implementation of CEQA should follow suit. The City should establish an on-line clearinghouse that conveys all the nuts and bolts of CEQA implementation. The full spectrum of information should be provided (e.g., how the process works, how documents are prepared, how CEQA is applied) to all conceivable participants: prospective developers, neighbors, interest groups, and CEQA consultants.

This new CEQA clearinghouse should also be a living site. CEQA (and its Guidelines) are not static laws. Each change, however big or small, presents an opportunity to inform and engage the community. For example, how will the City be implementing SB 743 (Aesthetics, Parking and Traffic)? These new provisions became effective January 1, 2014.

Another idea is to use CEQA exemptions to accelerate implementation of new Community Plans and the zoning code. Imagine a neighborhood with a broadly-endorsed Community Plan and new zoning code. Every project requires an Environmental Impact Report, right? Not necessarily. San Francisco has successfully reviewed dozens of projects under a locally calibrated Community Plan Exemption (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15183). The City should explore the possibility of implementing a similar process that leverages Community Plan EIRs to apply area-wide mitigation measures, and examine only whether there are specific impacts peculiar to a site or project.

In general, projects of the same type should have the same conditions of approval. Variations in conditions should only occur if there are different characteristics (for example, zoning, General Plan land use category, size, location, context). Using standardized conditions of approval would speed project review. Oakland streamlines its CEQA review through the use of uniformly-applied development standards that have been found to substantially mitigate environmental effects. Where the peculiar circumstances of a project result in significant environmental effects despite the uniform standards, the City then applies feasible mitigation measures. LA could establish a similar set of development standards to create a CEQA dialogue focused only on project-specific environmental effects.

Finally, the vast majority of projects are reviewed under CEQA without incident. However, the CEQA process has and will continue to be used to air debates about project merit. Without offering an opinion on the merits of CEQA litigation, opportunities for CEQA challenges should be clarified to maximize fairness and accountability. The City should capitalize on the increased transparency resulting from a new local CEQA clearinghouse by pursuing legislation that clarifies the deadline for CEQA appeals, prevents multiple appeals from being filed on the same project, and that prevents projects from being appealed mid-construction unless a significant change has occurred.

7.4. REMOVE BARRIERS TO GREEN SOLUTIONS

Remove barriers to new green approaches to energy production, stormwater management, landscaping and local food production.

Many communities have considered a variety of new green ideas, found some of them to be acceptable in various parts of the community, and ensured that their zoning does not create any barriers to implementation of these emerging concepts. Specific concepts include:

» Distributed renewable energy systems such as wind, solar and geothermal at both the site and community level.

» Stormwater facilities that focus on treating each drop where it falls, such as rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, downspout cisterns, permeable surfaces, and streets and parking lots that incorporate stormwater management facilities.

» Alternative landscaping approaches that focus on reducing water use, such as xeriscaping, reduction of turf, and increased use of native species.

» Local food production options such as vertical gardening, front yard or parkway gardens, community gardens, farmers markets and other elements of urban agriculture.

» Local animal production options such as raising chickens, rabbits or goats in appropriate locations.

» Other options that reduce carbon emissions.

LA should review their existing regulations on these and similar sustainability concepts, to ensure that existing rules do not create barriers to implementation of useful ideas. The City should also investigate opportunities to exceed the base requirements using incentives. Many of these issues may already have been interpreted to be acceptable practices by the City staff. This project provides the City the opportunity to apply new concepts, or accommodate new green techniques in specific zones.

In some cases, new green ideas bring impacts of their own, and in these instances, new development standards should be added to the code to address any significant impacts.

LA does include agriculturally-zoned semi-rural areas (mostly in the northern portion of the City) that feature large continuous parcels and allow farming under current zoning. However, if local food production is a key policy objective, these areas require additional zoning protection, and expanded options for using vacant parcels for animal husbandry and crops.

Additional Reading

City of LA: Low Impact Development Manual

Ron Finley's parkway garden caused a reconsideration of LA's rules.

7.5. REVIEW THE STANDARD MITIGATION MEASURES FOR IMPROVED STANDARDS

Embedding these standards in the zoning code simplifies the CEQA review process.

The City has a standard list of mitigation measures imposed when a project is subject to environmental review. Unfortunately, many projects in the City do not cross the thresholds requiring this review, and therefore the impact measures are not imposed. The series of specific use and design requirements in the standard mitigation measures should be reviewed, and where appropriate, incorporated into the new zoning code.

Some of the specific development standards that have been identified include:

» Grading

» Landscaping

» Light colored roofs

» Noise

» Outdoor lighting

» Retaining walls

» Site design adjacent to the LA River

» Stormwater mitigation

» Tenant relocation

» Trash receptacles

» Tree removal

Some of the specific use standards that should be considered include:

» Auto repair garages

» Helipad/helistop

» Horse property and equine industry facilities

» Spray painting

Improving standard mitigation measures, such as landscaping, in the new code will simplify the Environmental Impact Report process.

7.6. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: PARKS AND FRACKING

New ideas for Quimby regulations for park dedication, possible local regulation of fracking.

Parks

The fact that Los Angeles is a park-poor city compared to other large American cities is common knowledge, and is supported by a wealth of studies and statistics. More specifically, the City's park deficiency is concentrated in lower-income areas. The City's "Quimby" regulations (named after the State law) require developers of residential subdivisions to dedicate land or pay an in-lieu fee the City uses to develop and improve parks and recreational facilities that serve the residents of the subdivision. Quimby applies only to residential subdivisions (including, for example, condos and "tract homes"). The fees vary by zone and are charged per unit. Note that the City also charges a park fee (Finn fee) for residential projects entitled by a zone change.

Since Quimby fees are paid only by subdivisions, they generate park funding only for neighborhoods where subdivision development takes place. Subdivisions typically take place to either divide up vacant land into parcels for individual sale, or to divide up airspace within a proposed condominium development. The Department of City Planning is revising the Quimby ordinance separately from the **re:code LA** effort.

The Quimby program may be revised to ease distance restrictions on spending, update the credit system, provide fair standards for affordable housing units, encourage land dedication over in-lieu fees, require park impact fees for rental units, and encourage on-site open space.

Fracking

Recently, energy companies have increased the use of advanced well stimulation techniques to increase oil and gas production nationally. Well stimulation techniques in California broadly include hydraulic fracturing ("fracking"), acid fracturing, and acid matrix stimulation. These techniques use a high pressure cocktail of water, chemicals and in some cases other additives like sand, small resin or ceramic beads, to break up oil-and-gas-bearing geologic formations known as shale to increase production. Concerns about advance well stimulation and its impact on groundwater and air quality contamination have risen as a result. Many have also questioned the correlation between high pressure well stimulation activity and increased seismicity.

While new regulations on fracking and other types of well stimulation at the State level are in place, several cities are revisiting their zoning laws to further address advanced well stimulation. The Department of City Planning is currently examining the possibility of establishing new regulations on oil and gas activity. Any modifications can be included in the new zoning code.

The revised "Quimby" regulations will help encourage land dedication over in-lieu fees.

There are few regulations regarding fracking at the State and national level and some cities have established their own regulations to protect residents.

8. CODE DELIVERY

Ensure an open, transparent and responsive delivery and review process.

Zoning is only as efficient as its administrative provisions allow. A code's rules can be user-friendly, prescriptive and have the right standards for the community, but if the development review process is mired in lengthy and contentious political or bureaucratic processes, it will burden new the community with unnecessary costs and drive activity to surrounding communities.

In many cases, Los Angeles relies on process, not clear standards, to control development. Some do not trust that the standards in the zoning code will generate a reasonable outcome, so they have used the planning process, CEQA and the development review process to tinker with each development as it comes to the City. The City relies on a complicated system of review that depends on whether or not a Community Plan or Specific Plan applies, and zone changes are often burdened with additional Q, T or D conditions on a case-by-case basis. Los Angeles needs to improve its development standards, and create more predictable outcomes from its processes.

A streamlined and easy to use zoning code creates a predictable and straightforward path to approval.

The re:code LA Listening Sessions provided excellent input regarding challenges with the existing zoning code.

8. CODE DELIVERY

8.1. Develop Clear and Transparent Review Procedures: Provide for fair, predictable project review with effective public involvement as needed.

8.2. Develop New Zones to Implement Current and Future Plans: Create a full series of new, innovative and flexible zones that allow the City to effectively implement both current and future Community Plans.

8.3. Apply a Broader Approach to Use Regulation: Consolidate uses into categories for easier administration.

8.4. Modernize the Look, Feel and Organization of the Code: Create a modern page layout that is intuitive and easy to use.

8.5. Provide a User-friendly and Accessible Code: Offer the code in a variety of formats, focusing on a dynamic, web-based code system.

8.6. Ensure Continued Maintenance and Upkeep of the Code: Ensure the code can be easily amended as needed in the future, and that interpretations can be available along with the code text.

8.1. DEVELOP CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT REVIEW PROCEDURES

Provide for fair, predictable project review with effective public involvement as needed.

In reviewing prior reports and discussing development review with a variety of stakeholders from all parts of the process, the following key issues related to development review arose frequently:

» Length of time to reach final decisions on even simple permits is daunting.

» The process is expensive – even for small, non-controversial projects.

» Review processes are extraordinarily complex, with multiple layers of approval and approaches to regulation or relief.

» The 800 pages of the existing zoning code provide only part of the regulations that apply.

» Community Plans, Specific Plans, overlay districts, and rezoning conditions (Q's, T's, and D's) not only add to the development standards that must be met, but often also require extra layers of review.

» Applicants don't know the rules of the game before they engage in the process, and neighborhoods often suspect that the powerful interests are "gaming the system."

» Flexibility is confusing. The zoning code offers multiple paths for regulatory relief, including text amendments, variances, clarifications and interpretations; but while producing similar outcomes, they often follow different processes.

How does the City create a clearer path to approval, while still implementing existing planning policies and respecting neighborhood character? Some of the fixes are technical in nature. They involve reorganizing existing processes such as rezoning, conditional uses and site plans into a logical progression with a consistent internal work flow. The City needs to clarify existing procedural complexity–from the rules that govern specific decisions, to the kinds of processes that apply and who makes the decisions. What are the steps? Who makes the decision? What criteria do they apply? How is the decision appealed? Clarifying this provides significant implications for reducing the time and complexity involved in development review.

Other fixes will require harder choices that must balance community input and the predictability needed to make efficient decisions. The City should clarify when public input is allowed, and in what form. Los Angeles could resolve many design issues through clear standards, reducing the need for negotiation. One example might be transitions between commercial corridors and adjacent residential areas. Neighborhoods would spend less time influencing specific applications, engaged instead up front in crafting clear, predictable standards that implement community planning policy.

The Planning Department currently spends a great deal of time reviewing applications and holding public hearings for a myriad of smaller entitlement requests. Although variations, adjustments and slight modifications should be considered carefully, some of these deviations have become standardized and almost automatic, simply because the current code is out of date and does not reflect desired development patterns.

Some of these cases involve uses that are also governed by state or federal law. In those instances, the City's discretion is limited due to preemption. When public hearings are held on these matters, the community is often led to believe that the City has wide discretion, even when it does not.

As a result, a significant amount of staff time and resources is spent reviewing cases that could be streamlined or eliminated through modernization or revision of the zoning code. The adoption of clear and consistent standards and the standardization of conditions of approval can streamline procedures for these approvals. Applicants that comply with the standards and agree to the standardized conditions of approval should be rewarded with a by-right approval, while applicants seeking to deviate should still proceed through a thoughtful, public review process.

Finally, the City needs to consolidate the sources of regulation. The zoning code should become a "one-stop" resource for the standards that apply to a project and how to comply with them. The need to access development standards or other regulation in Community Plans, interpretation files, the City Charter and other sources should be simplified to accessing the new zoning code. While there will always be other applicable regulations, the zoning code must, at a minimum, identify them, and provide a cross-reference to help applicants find them.

To the extent possible, the new zoning code will also be aligned with other codes and plans, eliminating conflicts and redundancies. City Departments that sit on the project's Technical Advisory Committee will help ensure this alignment, including the Department of Building and Safety, the Bureau of Sanitation, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Street Services, Bureau of Street Lighting, Police, Fire, and Metro. Specific attention will be paid to aligning the new zoning code with Building and Fire codes, as well as the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Los Angeles could resolve many design issues through clear standards, reducing the need for paperwork, staff time and negotiation.

8.2. DEVELOP NEW ZONES TO IMPLEMENT CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS

Create a full series of new, innovative and flexible zones that allow the City to effectively implement both current and future Community Plans.

While the City intends to improve the quality of existing zones through improvements to the development standards that apply in those zones, and improve their clarity by flattening the overlay details into a new base zone, this will not fix areas that have the wrong zoning applied today (based on either their existing or desired development pattern). Over the coming years, Los Angeles has the opportunity to replace this inappropriate zoning with a series of new, innovative and flexible zones that more effectively implement both current and future Community Plans.

The zone change process following any new planning effort should be eased through the creation of this palette of new zones that allow the planners to think about implementation as they work to resolve planning issues. Goals for these new zones should include:

- Diversity of housing types and sizes;
- Housing affordability;
- Adaptability to climate change;
- Reduction of greenhouse gases;
- Shared and on-site stormwater options;
- More predicable outcomes;
- Ability to adapt to economic and market changes;
- Allow for innovation;
- Improved transportation options and choices;
- Human-scaled, walkable design; and
- A focus compact urban development at centers and nodes.

These new zones will allow the City to think more broadly about the future, and will help ensure the new zoning code is ready for change where and when people want change. They can remove the barriers to improving the sustainability of individual development sites, as well as entire neighborhoods.

These new districts could be applied any time a zone change is considered. This would include opportunities to change existing development patterns, mixing housing types, creating mixed-use areas (whether mixing residential, commercial or industrial uses) and improved walkability and urban design.

Mixed use areas and other core growth areas may be hampered by a focus on residential density as a regulatory measure. Placing an emphasis on density can encourage developers to max out their building envelope with little or no thought to how the development addresses the street. It can also have an adverse impact on affordable housing. If each floor of a new residential building is 5,000 square feet in area, does it really matter whether each floor contains two 2,500 square foot units or four 1,250 square foot units? While this report does not propose removing density restrictions across the board, consideration should be given for an approach that removes density in high growth areas. An approach that focuses on form over density should be considered.

Over the coming years, LA has the opportunity to replace old zones with a series of new, innovative and flexible zones.

8.3. APPLY A BROADER APPROACH TO USE REGULATION

Consolidate uses into categories for easier administration.

The City currently regulates use through a matrix of allowed uses that extends for many pages. This long list of specific uses is still far from comprehensive, and is not set up to accommodate the addition of new uses. Other cities are approaching this problem by consolidating a variety of uses into a use "category" and placing that category in a table. For example, the table might include a use described as "retail sales." A definition of the category, along with example uses, is provided in the zoning code. This supports the interpretation of new uses as similar to "retail sales," and therefore part of the same category. This eases interpretation by the City over time.

In addition to making the Zoning Code more flexible, there is a unique opportunity to use the web-based code system to provide a more comprehensive list of existing uses, including a determination of which use category they are allowed in. This complete use list may run to thousands of uses, but would allow applicants and staff to easily determine how a specific use is intended to be handled. The list would continue to grow as new uses are identified through the permit counter.

Where uses are identified as having external impacts that must be managed, a set of use standards can be applied to ensure the impacts of a specific use are mitigated.

H. Retail Sales and Service

Companies or individuals involved in the sale, lease, or rental of new or used products, or providing personal services or repair services to the general public.

Principal Uses	Accessory Uses
Sales-Oriented Store selling, leasing or renting consumer, home, and business goods including but not limited to alcoholic beverages, antiques, appliances, art, art supplies, baked goods, bicycles, books, building supplies, cameras, carpet and floor coverings, crafts, clothing, computers, computer supplies, convenience goods, dry goods, electronic equipment, fabric, flowers, furniture, garden supplies, gifts or novelties, groceries, hardware, home improvement, household products, jewelry, medical supplies, music, musical instruments, pets, pet supplies, pharmaceuticals, photo finishing, picture frames, plants, postal substation, printed materials, produce, souvenirs, sporting goods, stationery, tobacco, used or secondhand goods, videos, and related products Art or photo studio, gallery Convenience store with gas pumps, gas station Convenience store without gas pumps Consignment store Greenhouse or nursery, commercial, garden center Pawnshop Payday loans, title loan establishments Photo finishing pickup station, photo finishing by computer and retail sales Retail Sales Outdoor (vendor), Flea Market, Farmers Market, Farm Stand, Open Air Market, Vehicle parts and accessories, Wholesale club **Service-Oriented** Animal grooming, animal hospital, veterinary clinic, pet clinic, animal boarding, animal shelter, kennel, doggy day care Dance, martial arts, music studio or classroom Catering establishment, small-scale Cleaning establishment, small-scale Dry-cleaning or laundry drop-off facility, laundromat, cleaning, pickup station, coin operated pickup station Funeral home or mortuary, undertaking establishment Hair, nail, tanning, massage therapy and personal care service, barber or beauty shop Quick-sign service, printing and publishing Post office, Taxidermist Tattoo shop, palmist, psychic, medium **Repair-Oriented** Appliance, bicycle, canvas product, clock, computer, jewelry, m... instrument, office equipment, radio	Artisan manufacturing Associated office Automatic one bay car wash facility Drive-thru facility Food preparation or dining area Off-street parking On-site day care where children are cared for while parents or guardians are occupied on the premises Repackaging of goods for on-site sale Storage of goods Solar (photovoltaic) panels Wind turbines and other integrated renewable energy systems

Consolidating uses into categories and listing the standards on further pages will make the zoning code more flexible and more easily administered.

8.4. MODERNIZE THE LOOK, FEEL AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CODE

Create a modern page layout that is intuitive and easy to use.

A number of elements contribute to the reader's sense that a technical document is easy to use.

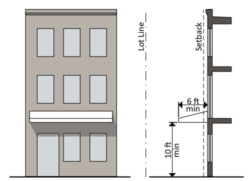
Intuitive Outline. An intuitive outline that helps users find the material they need swiftly is one of the keys to usability. The new outline needs to pull together related provisions currently found throughout the code.

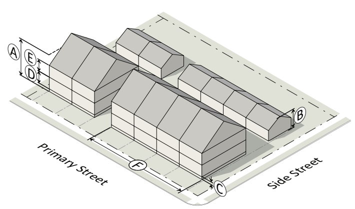
Page Layout. Generous use of white space, elegant font selection and prominent titles also add to the document's usability. Other important features include a header that provides the reader with their location in the document and a footer that includes the date of publication.

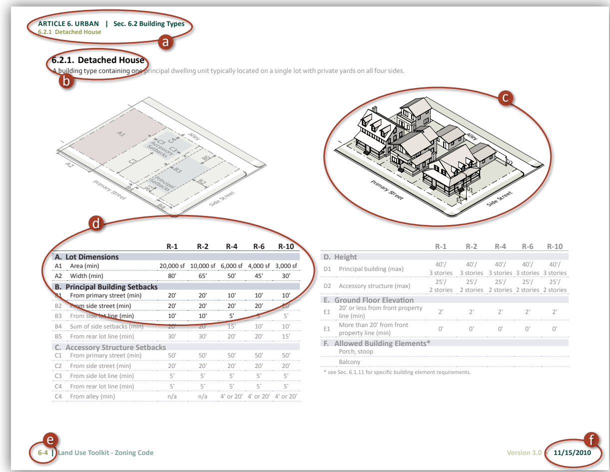
Tables and Graphics. The existing zoning code makes limited use of tables and graphics. As they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words." While we are not suggesting the City eliminate the words, however, supplementing them with images and tables makes access to the information more intuitive for more people.

Tables are most useful when a comparison of standards is helpful—for example, the allowed uses in a series of zones.

Graphics are most helpful for illustrating standards, especially those related to building form.







ARTICLE 6. URBAN | Sec. 6.2 Building Types
6.2.1 Detached House

6.2.1. Detached House

A building type containing one principal dwelling unit typically located on a single lot with private yards on all four sides.

		R-1	R-2	R-4	R-6	R-10
A.	**Lot Dimensions**					
A1	Area (min)	20,000 sf	10,000 sf	6,000 sf	4,000 sf	3,000 sf
A2	Width (min)	80'	65'	50'	45'	30'
B.	**Principal Building Setbacks**					
B1	From primary street (min)	20'	20'	10'	10'	10'
B2	From side street (min)	20'	20'	20'	20'	20'
B3	From side lot line (min)	10'	10'	5'	5'	5'
B4	Sum of side setbacks (min)	20'	20'	15'	10'	10'
B5	From rear lot line (min)	30'	30'	20'	20'	15'
C.	**Accessory Structure Setbacks**					
C1	From primary street (min)	50'	50'	50'	50'	50'
C2	From side street (min)	20'	20'	20'	20'	20'
C3	From side lot line (min)	5'	5'	5'	5'	5'
C4	From rear lot line (min)	5'	5'	5'	5'	5'
C4	From alley (min)	n/a	n/a	4' or 20'	4' or 20'	4' or 20'

		R-1	R-2	R-4	R-6	R-10
D.	**Height**					
D1	Principal building (max)	40'/ 3 stories	40'/ 3 stories	40'/ 3 stories	40'/ 3 stories	40'/ 3 stories
D2	Accessory structure (max)	25'/ 2 stories	25'/ 2 stories	25'/ 2 stories	25'/ 2 stories	25'/ 2 stories
E.	**Ground Floor Elevation**					
E1	20' or less from front property line (min)	2'	2'	2'	2'	2'
E1	More than 20' from front property line (min)	0'	0'	0'	0'	0'
F.	**Allowed Building Elements***					
	Porch, stoop					
	Balcony					

* see Sec. 6.1.11 for specific building element requirements.

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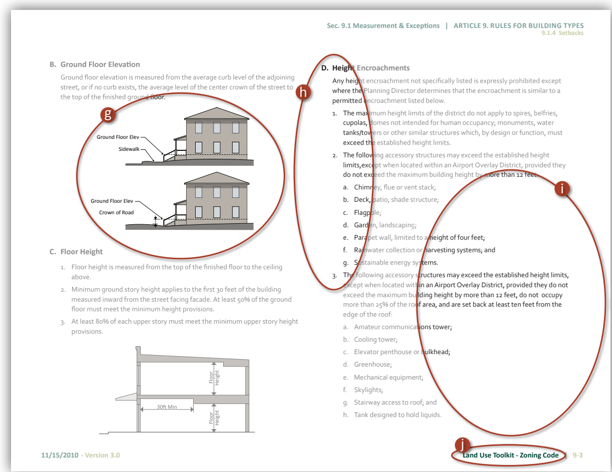
- a Running header
- b Prominent titles
- c Graphics and illustrations
- d Clean, easy to read tables convey information
- e Page numbers reference article
- f Adoption date



Sec. 9.1 Measurement & Exceptions | ARTICLE 9. RULES FOR BUILDING TYPES
9.1.4 Setbacks

B. Ground Floor Elevation

Ground floor elevation is measured from the average curb level of the adjoining street, or if no curb exists, the average level of the center crown of the street to the top of the finished ground floor.

C. Floor Height

1. Floor height is measured from the top of the finished floor to the ceiling above.
2. Minimum ground story height applies to the first 30 feet of the building measured inward from the street facing facade. At least 50% of the ground floor must meet the minimum height provisions.
3. At least 80% of each upper story must meet the minimum upper story height provisions.

D. Height Encroachments

Any height encroachment not specifically listed is expressly prohibited except where the Planning Director determines that the encroachment is similar to a permitted encroachment listed below.

1. The maximum height limits of the district do not apply to spires, belfries, cupolas, domes not intended for human occupancy; monuments, water tanks/towers or other similar structures which, by design or function, must exceed the established height limits.
2. The following accessory structures may exceed the established height limits,except when located within an Airport Overlay District, provided they do not exceed the maximum building height by more than 12 feet.
   a. Chimney, flue or vent stack;
   b. Deck, patio, shade structure;
   c. Flagpole;
   d. Garden, landscaping;
   e. Parapet wall, limited to a height of four feet;
   f. Rainwater collection or harvesting systems; and
   g. Sustainable energy systems.
3. The following accessory structures may exceed the established height limits, except when located within an Airport Overlay District, provided they do not exceed the maximum building height by more than 12 feet, do not occupy more than 25% of the roof area, and are set back at least ten feet from the edge of the roof:
   a. Amateur communications tower;
   b. Cooling tower;
   c. Elevator penthouse or bulkhead;
   d. Greenhouse;
   e. Mechanical equipment;
   f. Skylights;
   g. Stairway access to roof; and
   h. Tank designed to hold liquids.

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- g Graphics reinforce how to measure standards
- h Consistent numbering, indented **paragraphs**
- i Generous use of white space
- j Running footer

8.5. PROVIDE A USER-FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE CODE

Offer the code in a variety of formats, focusing on a dynamic, web-based code system.

This project provides an excellent opportunity to take advantage of modern technology for the display of documents. The project contract includes a dynamic, web-based document system that will be designed first and foremost to display the new, graphically-oriented zoning code on a variety of devices ranging from desktop computers to tablets, E-readers and smart phones. In fact, the design of the entire new document will be focused on delivering the zoning code in digital as well as traditional paper format.

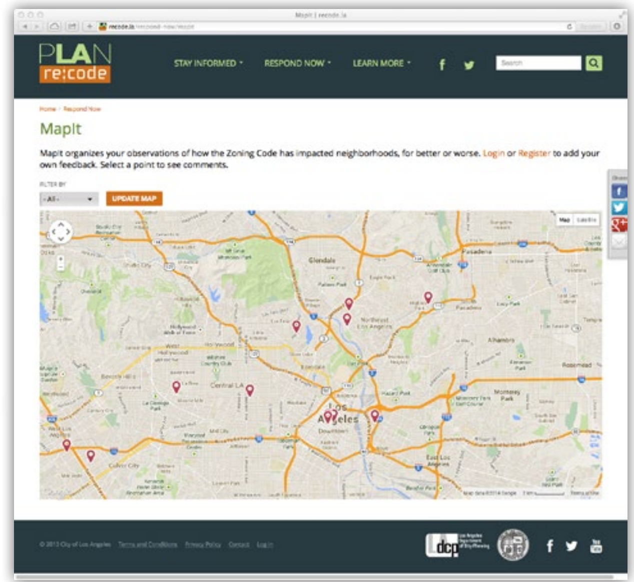
Once the zoning code is complete, users will be able to create a customized summary of the code just for their zone or proposed use. This zoning code summary will help reduce the complexity of the zoning code by providing users with just the sections relevant to their goals.

The system will also allow users to start in ZIMAS, the City's property mapping system, with a specific property, and then link back to the zoning code.

A "note" function will allow formal interpretations of the zoning code to be displayed where the interpreted language is found, eliminating the need to research paper files in the Planning office.

Finally, a series of Frequently Asked Questions will serve as a layman's user guide to the zoning code. The intent here is to reduce the amount of time staff need to spend explaining the same thing to multiple customers. Key residential topics might include, "what can I build on my property?" or "am I allowed to install solar panels on my roof?" These and other useful supplemental materials will be incorporated into the web-based zoning code system and displayed to users to support ongoing implementation of the zoning code.

During drafting of the zoning code, the City's project website, www.recode.la, will offer the public an opportunity to comment on code drafts posted as the project moves forward, ensuring that all those residents, businesses and professionals that desire to comment have the opportunity to do so. All public comments will be considered by the City staff during the revision of zoning code drafts as they move from initial concept to adoption-ready drafts for consideration by the City Council.



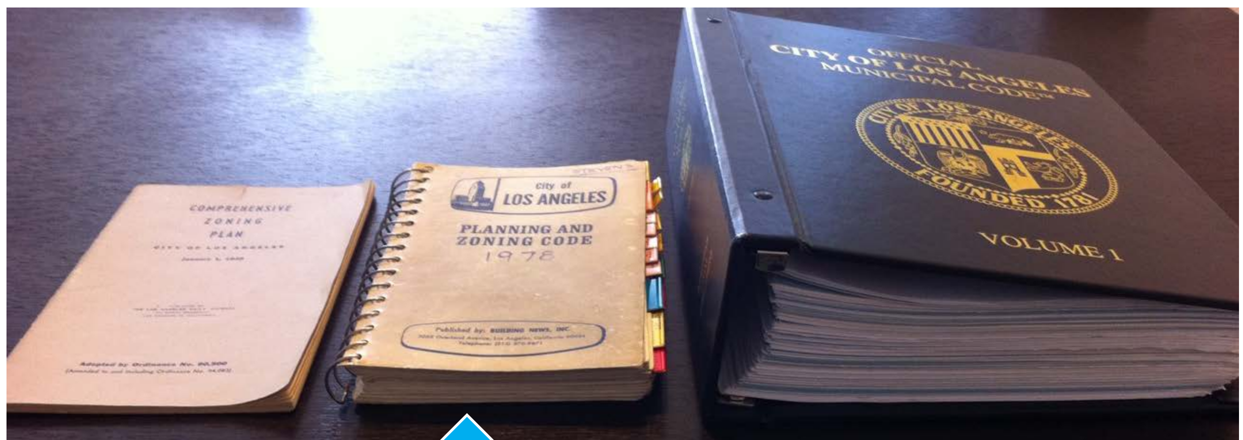
8.6. ENSURE CONTINUED MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP OF THE CODE

Ensure the code can be easily amended as needed in the future, and that interpretations can be available along with the code text.

Every zoning code is a living document, subject to revision on a regular basis to keep it up to date and in sync with changing planning policy. As amendments to the text are made, it is critical that City staff are able to manage the preparation of amendments, page layout in the document, and export to the web-based code system.

The zoning code must be written to ensure easy update and revision, while the new web-based code system must provide for ready transfer of new code text into the dynamic web system.

The new web-based zoning code system will allow for the insertion of notes into the zoning code's pages so that as formal interpretations occur, they can be annotated and available to all users of the zoning code. In addition, the City should strive to update the zoning code periodically (perhaps every two years), rewriting those sections that have been interpreted and then eliminating the notes.



First adopted in 1946, the zoning code has grown from a simple, 84-page pamphlet to an unwieldy, 600+ page book.

9. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table provides a summary of actions that are intended to occur during as part **re:code LA**, during parallel efforts by the Planning Department or other City Departments, and in future efforts that are neither funded or scheduled.

	re:code LA	Parallel Effort	Future Effort	Notes:
1. Distinct Neighborhoods				
1.1. Combine the Existing Residential Requirements into a New System				
Create new zones that replicate current requirements (base zone plus overlays)	X			
Apply new zones using conversion table	X			
1.2 Continue to Protect Historic Resources and Established Neighborhoods				
Improve existing HPOZ procedures, standards	X			
Create new HPOZ's			X	
Create new, more predictable base zones	X			
Apply new, more predictable base zones			X	
1.3 Address Impacts Within Single-Family Residential Neighborhoods				
Update short-term rental policy			X	
Provide additional eldercare urban design and buffer criteria		X		Council Ad Hoc Committee
Address larger community care facilities (7 or more residents)		X		
Address unregulated group living facilities		X		Council Ad Hoc Committee
1.4. Enhance Multi-Family Design Standards				
Improve design standards based on adopted Residential Citywide Design Guidelines	X			
Apply Baseline Mansionization and Baseline Hillside regulations	X			
1.5. Improve the Transition Between Corridors and Neighborhoods				
Created new transition standards	X			
Replace Parking (P) Zone using conversion based on zone for associated building	X			
1.6. Retain the Rural Lifestyle				
Update animals allowed in each zone	X			
Do not allow accessory structures to become nonconforming due to adjacent development	X			

	re:code LA	Parallel Effort	Future Effort	Notes:
2. Housing Affordability and Diversity				
2.1. Continue to Provide Incentives for Affordable Housing				
Expand bonus and incentive provisions for affordable units within walking distance of transit	X			
2.2. Minimize the Displacement of Core Transit Ridership				
Preserve rent-stabilized units	X			
Require tenant relocation plans	X			
2.3. Provide a More Prescriptive Set of Housing Options				
Create a series of new zones with prescriptive housing types	X			
Apply new zones			X	Applied through Community Plans
2.4. Improve Regulations for Second Units				
Develop new accessory unit standards	X			
2.5. Enhance the Design of Small Lot Subdivisions				
Add standards for small lot subdivisions based on recent guidelines	X			
Create a new zone allowing for small lots without multi-family	X			
Apply new zone allowing for small lots without multi-family			X	Applied through Community Plans
2.6. Remove Barriers to Micro-housing				
Allow micro-units Downtown	X			
Consider options for micro-units in transit-rich areas	X			
Consider "tiny house" as accessory units	X			
2.7. Improve Options for Shared Housing Communities				
Consider options for additional flexibility in shared housing arrangements	X			
3. Centers and Corridors				
3.1. Improve Base Zoning Options for Commercial Corridors				
Create new base zones for centers and corridors	X			
Apply new base zones for centers and corridors			X	Applied through Community Plans
3.2. Require Enhanced Walkability and Form Standards				
Add new building form standards that encourage pedestrian activity	X			

	re:code LA	Parallel Effort	Future Effort	Notes:
3. Centers and Corridors (continued)				
3.3. Expand and improve the Approach to Commercial Corners				
Replace the mini-shopping center and commercial corner development rules	X			
3.4. Provide Enhanced Standards for Landscaping				
Create consolidated, enhanced landscaping standards	X			
3.5. Integrate Sign Types and Design Standards within the New Zoning				
Create a consolidated, consistent approach to regulating type and design of signs	X			
Apply new sign regulations based on context	X			
3.6. Consider Improved Options for Design Review				
Pull existing design standards (not guidelines) into the new zoning code	X			
Incorporate all design guidelines by direct reference	X			
Create rigorous approach to codifying design guidelines		X		
4. Transportation Choice				
4.1. Rethink Zoning Around Transit Stations				
Create new zones to implement Transit Neighborhood Plans (TOD's)	X			
Apply new zones to TOD's		X		
4.2. Prepare a Comprehensive Set of Street and Block Standards				
Create new street and block standards based on the new Mobility Element	X			
4.3. Rightsize the Code's Approach to Parking				
Consider MPR Zone approaches for citywide application	X			
Improve standards for parking citywide, link to context (TOD, neighborhood commercial)	X			
5. Jobs and Innovation				
5.1. Create Industrial Sanctuaries to Meet Future Employment Needs				
Revise existing industrial zones to eliminate conflicting uses	X			
Apply appropriate zones to Transition or Correction areas identified in plans			X	Applied through Community Plans
Create a consistent approach to buffering industrial zones	X			

	re:code LA	Parallel Effort	Future Effort	Notes:
5. Jobs and Innovation (continued)				
5.2. Prepare New Industrial Zones to Implement Community Plans				
Create new hybrid industrial base zones	X			
Apply new hybrid industrial base zones			X	Applied through Community Plans
5.3. Rezone Industrial Land Only Where Necessary				
Continue to apply industrial retention policy		X		
Apply new zones in strategic areas		X		Applied through Community Plans
5.4. Enhance the Jobs Housing Balance				
Expand home occupations	X			
Create live-work standards	X			
6. A Strong Core				
6.1. Make Downtown a More Complete Neighborhood				
Update Downtown Community Plans		X		
Create a series of new Downtown zones that allow for a more complete neighborhood	X			
Apply new Downtown zones		X		
6.2. Revise the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance				
Enhance the ARO to expand its use Downtown	X			
Consider options for applying the ARO citywide	X			
6.3 Rethink the Transfer of Floor Area (TFAR)				
Modify the TFAR to clarify sending and receiving zones	X			
6.4. Fix the Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Ordinance				
Modify the ordinance to eliminate conflicts with other, similar programs	X			
7. A Healthy City				
7.1. Implement the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles				
Create citywide design standards that support healthy living	X			
Implement other zoning concepts adopted in the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles	X	X		

	re:code LA	Parallel Effort	Future Effort	Notes:
7. A Healthy City (continued)				
7.2. Implement the LA River Master Plan				
Implement the LA River Master Plan through adoption of the River Improvement Overlay (RIO)		X		
7.3. CEQA Streamlining and Improvements				
Create a CEQA clearinghouse to help applicants and neighbors understand the law			X	
Use Community Plan EIR's to streamline the process when projects meet mitigation requirements			X	
Pursue State legislation that clarifies CEQA processes			X	
7.4. Remove Barriers to Green Solutions				
Audit the new zoning code draft to remove barriers to green solutions	X			
7.5. Review the Standard Mitigation Measures for Improved Standards				
Include standard impact mitigation standards, specific use standards	X			
7.6. Other Environmental Issues: Parks and Fracking				
Revise Quimby park dedication regulations		X		
Create local fracking regulations	X	X		
8. Code Delivery				
8.1. Develop Clear and Transparent Review Procedures				
Consolidate and revise existing procedures, create clarity, improve efficiency	X			
Enhance City staff capacity for development review		X		
8.2. Develop New Zones to Implement Current and Future Plans				
Prepare new zones that serve as a toolkit for future and current planning efforts	X			
Apply new zones			X	Applied through Community Plans
8.3. Apply a Broader Approach to Use Regulation				
Consolidate uses into categories for easier administration	X			

	re:code LA	Parallel Effort	Future Effort	Notes:
8. Code Delivery (continued)				
8.4. Modernize the Look, Feel and Organization of the Code				
Create an intuitive outline, improve page layout and add tables and graphics	X			
8.5. Provide a User-Friendly and Accessible Code				
Create a dynamic, user-friendly, web-based zoning code for a variety of digital devices	X			
Create new GIS mapping options that link back to the new zoning code		X		
8.6. Ensure Continued Maintenance and Upkeep of the Code				
Craft new zoning code provisions to be easy to update	X			
Create a new web-based zoning code that can be maintained by City staff	X			

PLAN re:code

A New Zoning Code for a 21st Century Los Angeles

To create livable communities, encourage sustainable development and foster economic vitality, we need a modern and user-friendly zoning code – we need to **re:code LA**.

Zoning Code Evaluation Report