

FACT SHEET

Proposed Wildlife Ordinance - Summer 2023 Update

Summary


The proposed Wildlife Ordinance was heard by City Council's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee on June 20, 2023. The PLUM Committee unanimously approved the proposal and instructed the City Attorney to prepare the final ordinance including modifications as detailed in the chart at the end of this fact sheet. Additionally, City Planning was instructed to report back to the City Council on several topics, including resources needed to implement the ordinance. A chart detailing changes between drafts of the proposed ordinance can be found on page 5 of this fact sheet.

This fact sheet is meant to clarify the status of this proposed ordinance, help readers understand the changes made to the ordinance, and help provide additional clarity on what the ordinance does and does not propose to do.

For more information about the proposed Wildlife Ordinance and to reference previous fact sheets, please visit planning4la.org/wildlife. Additional information can also be found on the recent [Council Districts 4 and 5 fact sheet](#).

Background

[City Council Motion 14-0518](#), introduced in 2014, called for City Planning to prepare a Wildlife Ordinance containing a set of land use regulations that would address wildlife habitat and connectivity in the city. The Wildlife Pilot Study concluded that connecting larger contiguous patches of habitat provides greater ecological value than preserving isolated patches or singular pathways. This broader ecosystem approach not only promotes wildlife habitat and connectivity, but also addresses sustainability and planning for hazards associated with climate change, increased wildfire risk, and overall biodiversity, which is another important initiative being undertaken by the City in response to a [Biodiversity Motion \(2016\)](#). The Wildlife Ordinance was



approved by the City Planning Commission in December 2022, and by Council's PLUM Committee in June 2023. It is currently awaiting consideration by the full City Council.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Will the Wildlife Ordinance change the type of housing that may be built or down-zone properties?

No. The ordinance will create a Supplemental Use District (SUD) called a "Wildlife District", which will establish an additional set of development regulations to supplement the existing base zone of the properties located within the Wildlife District. Properties subject to the new SUD will have a Wildlife Ordinance (WLD) suffix added to the zone of the property, but the Wildlife Ordinance will not make any changes to allowable uses or density permitted by the underlying zone of the property.

2. Will the ordinance prohibit the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)?

No. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are regulated by the [City's ADU Ordinance](#) and by State ADU law. Applicable objective zoning standards will apply to ADUs. Further information on the implementation of the City's 2019 ADU Ordinance and State ADU law visit the City's Adopted Land Use Regulations on the City Planning can be found [here](#).

3. Will the ordinance prohibit the ability to renovate, repair, or replace existing homes?

The Wildlife Ordinance will not prohibit the ability to make repairs or renovate existing homes or structures, including homes that do not comply with the new proposed Wildlife Ordinance standards. The Los Angeles Municipal Code contains standards and regulations for non-conforming structures, and the Wildlife Ordinance does not propose to change any of these standards. Additionally, to ensure that homeowners will be able to restore or rebuild their homes in the event that it is damaged or destroyed in a natural disaster, language has been added to the ordinance to state that such activity will not count as a 'Project' in the Wildlife Ordinance.

Projects that propose extensive remodeling work where the aggregate value of all alterations within a one-year period exceeds 50 percent of the replacement cost of the main building will be counted as Major Remodels (Hillside) - an existing term in the Los Angeles Municipal Code - and will be subject to the applicable proposed regulations of the Wildlife Ordinance.

4. Does the ordinance prohibit fences, or require new standards for allowable fence heights or locations?

No. Previous drafts of the ordinance proposed locational standards for fencing, however these standards were removed in response to community feedback. The current draft of the Wildlife Ordinance **does not** prohibit fencing, nor does it modify any existing standards for allowable fence heights or locations. The ordinance does propose to prohibit materials and design features that pose threats for wildlife, such as barbed wire, plastic mesh, sharp glass, and uncapped fence posts.

5. How is the ordinance proposing to change existing Lot Coverage regulations?

The Los Angeles Municipal Code currently regulates Lot Coverage in several sections, including Sec. 12.21 C.10 for areas subject to the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO). The entire proposed Wildlife Ordinance District is within a BHO area where current Code limits lot coverage to no more than 40% of the area of a Lot (for Buildings and Structures extending more than 6 feet above natural ground level).


In order to minimize disturbance to landform and vegetation as well as to minimize impermeable ground cover impacting stormwater runoff, groundwater infiltration, and flooding, the Wildlife Ordinance proposes to expand the types of features considered in the calculation of Lot Coverage to include amenities such as pools, sport courts, and other paving that have Lot Coverage impacts similar to building footprints. The ordinance proposes to increase the maximum allowable Lot Coverage from 40% to 50% in order to accommodate the inclusion of these additional features in Lot Coverage calculations.

On R1 and R2 zoned lots, which are generally the smallest and most constrained residential lots in the proposed Ordinance area, this proposed regulation would not apply, and Lot Coverage would continue to be calculated and limited according to current Los Angeles Municipal Code provisions.

On very large lots, where the maximum Lot Coverage derived from the calculation of 50% of the area of the lot would otherwise exceed 100,000 square feet, the maximum Lot Coverage is proposed to be limited to 100,000 square feet.

6. Will the ordinance affect the owners of small lots disproportionately?

All applicants are permitted to at least develop to the Guaranteed Minimum Residential Floor Area for their lot, as established in the table in Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 12.21 C.10, regardless of lot conditions. This ensures that smaller lots, where there may be fewer options for locating development away from steep slopes, are still afforded some development opportunity.



Additionally, in an effort to not have a disproportionate impact on owners of smaller lots within the proposed Wildlife District, lots that are zoned R1 or R2, which are generally the smallest residential lots, are exempt from proposed Lot Coverage regulations contained in the ordinance. These lots, however, will still be subject to current Lot Coverage regulations.

Site Plan Review may be required for large projects, which are anticipated to be primarily found on larger lots in the Wildlife District. Remedial Grading over 1,000 cubic yards and projects resulting in 6,000 square feet or more of Residential Floor Area would both trigger the requirement for Site Plan Review.

7. Is the Proposed Ordinance consistent with SB330 and other State regulations?

City Planning is working in concert with the City Attorney's Office to ensure that the Wildlife Ordinance maintains consistency with the Housing Accountability Act, Housing Crisis Act, and other State regulations. As instructed by the City Planning Commission, City Planning will be preparing an analysis of zoning capacity under the Ordinance, and the results of this analysis could necessitate City Council consideration and possible concurrent adoption of the Wildlife Ordinance with another zoning ordinance to ensure no overall reduction in housing capacity.

8. What are the remaining steps in the adoption process for this ordinance?

In June 2023 the PLUM Committee of the City Council approved the draft ordinance. The next step for the Wildlife Ordinance is to be reviewed by the City Attorney for form and legality. This process is anticipated to take several months. Following this review, the ordinance will need to receive approval by the full City Council before it is adopted. Following Council approval, an effective date will be established following at least 30 days after the date of approval in order to provide time for implementation efforts to be established.

9. What changes have been made to the proposed ordinance?

Please refer to the Summary of Ordinance Changes chart below:

Summary of Ordinance Changes

	Planning Department Draft (May 2021)	City Planning Commission Draft (December 2022)	PLUM Committee Draft (June 2023)
Wildlife Resources	No-build buffers around Wildlife Resources. 50' buffers for Water Resources 15' buffers for Open Channels 50' buffers for Open Space	Removed no-build buffers around Wildlife Resources. Added Site Plan Review for projects in buffer areas and reduced Open Space buffers from 50' to 25'.	Added to the definition of Open Space to include, "City-owned property that is vacant as of the effective date of this ordinance."
Basement Residential Floor Area	No longer allowed unlimited livable basement areas to be exempt from calculations of Residential Floor Area (RFA).	Edited to allow for up to 1,000 square feet of basement living areas to be exempted from RFA calculation. Remaining basement level living areas would count.	Removed 1,000 square foot exemption.
Slope Band Residential Floor Area	Proposed limitation on calculation of RFA for 60% slopes. Eliminated existing covered parking exemption.	Removed limitation on calculation of RFA for 60% slopes. Retained existing covered parking exemption.	Restored limitation on calculation of RFA for 60% slopes.
Biological Assessments			Added requirement for Biological Assessments to be prepared by Qualified Biologists for projects affecting Wildlife Resources/buffers.
Lot Coverage	Proposed Maximum Impermeable Coverage as a percentage of lot size, according to a formula based on lot size. Expanded Lot Coverage to include pools; planters; sport courts; pavement, patios, and decks.	Maximum Impermeable Coverage and formula removed. Increased maximum Lot Coverage to 50% or 100,000 square feet, whichever is less. Exempted R1 and R2 lots.	
Applicability, Projects, Permits	Specified project types including New Construction, Major Additions, and Remodels.	Identified specific project types and applicability for each regulation in the ordinance. Added Grading and Tree Removal as project types.	
Fencing	Requirements for wildlife permeability and restrictions on location, height, and materials.	Removed requirement for wildlife permeability and restrictions on location and height.	
Additional Instructions	City Planning Commission: Analyze zoning capacity for SB330 compliance for Council consideration with the final ordinance. Study and report back on the effectiveness of the proposed ordinance 3 years following the effectuation date. PLUM: Department of City Planning, Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, and Urban Forestry to report back on the resources needed to implement the Wildlife District for consideration with the final ordinance. City Planning to create a list of Qualified Biologists. City Attorney to prepare final ordinance.		