

FACT SHEET

Updated 03/27/25

Emergency Shelter Code Amendment

Case No. CPC-2025-1648-CA; ENV-2025-1649-SE

Summary

In response to a motion adopted by the City Council ([CF 24-1587](#)), the Department of City Planning has prepared a technical amendment to the City's existing emergency shelter definition in Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to better align with State law.

Background

According to the 2024 Homeless Count, 45,252 individuals are experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles, with approximately 29,275 (65%) of those individuals considered to be unsheltered on any given night. The issue of unsheltered homelessness is exacerbated by a continuing shortage of homeless shelters.

State law allows California jurisdictions to declare a "shelter crisis" in order to take immediate action to alleviate the lack of available shelter for persons experiencing homelessness. The declaration of a shelter crisis allows emergency shelters to locate on publicly owned or leased land or land owned by charitable organizations through a streamlined review process, while also enacting alternative health and safety standards in lieu of some state and local housing, planning and zoning or other housing standards "to the extent that strict compliance would in any way prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the shelter crisis" (CA Government Code 8698.1(b)). The City of Los Angeles is currently operating under a shelter crisis.

Key Provisions

The LAMC currently includes a six-month residency limit for emergency shelters, defined as “shelters for the homeless” (LAMC Ch 1 12.03) and “supportive housing: temporary” (LAMC Ch 1A Sec. 5D.2.4.C and Div. 14.3) in the zoning code. This time limit does not exist in the definition of “homeless shelter” found in the state’s emergency shelter regulations (CA Government Code 8698.4(c)(1)). The proposed code amendment would remove the six-month limit, as it is not required by state law and is unnecessarily restrictive. Specifically, the definition of emergency shelters on publicly owned or leased land (LAMC Ch 1 Sec. 12.80 and Ch 1A Sec. 1.6.2) and land owned by charitable organizations (LAMC Ch 1 Sec. 12.81 and Ch 1A Sec. 1.6.3) would be amended to link to the state definition.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does this proposed amendment affect existing emergency shelters in the City?

The amendments are technical in nature, and are intended to better align local emergency shelter regulations and state law. The proposed ordinance will not change the existing permission levels (where shelters can locate), or standards (building design, density, etc.) for emergency shelters in the City of Los Angeles.

How long can someone reside in an emergency shelter?

Under State law, there is no time limit for residency in an emergency shelter. This code amendment clarifies this locally, removing a self-imposed six month residency limit from the LAMC. Emergency shelters are permitted to operate during a declared shelter crisis, which can be enacted by local governments so long as “a significant number of persons are without the ability to obtain shelter, resulting in a threat to their health and safety” (CA Government Code 8698(d)).

Have there been previous amendments to the emergency shelter code sections?

The emergency shelter regulations have undergone several amendments in recent years. In 2017, the City Council adopted a zoning code amendment to the City’s emergency shelter ordinance to take advantage of the state law (Ordinance 184836). In 2018, after state law was amended by AB 962 to include a wider range of City owned and leased land, the City Council amended building code Section 91.8605 as provided by Government Code Section 8698.4, in order to expand opportunities to create

additional emergency shelters in the City by updating health and safety regulations enforced by LADBS and LAFD (Ordinance 185490). In 2019, the City Council adopted a zoning code amendment (Ordinance 186339) removing a provision requiring City Council to declare a shelter emergency every 365 days, reflecting previous changes to state law.

What are the next steps?

The City Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing and consider the proposed code amendment after 8:30 a.m. on April 24, 2025 at Van Nuys City Hall, 14410 Sylvan Street Room 215, Van Nuys, CA 91401. Afterwards, the ordinance will advance to City Council for their consideration and adoption.

Who can I contact for additional information?

For additional information, please visit the Planning Department's Proposed Regulations page [here](#). To submit comments or ask questions, contact Julia HeideIman at julia.heideIman@lacity.org or (818) 374-5045. Comments submitted prior to the end of the day on April 11, 2025 will be considered for the staff recommendation report. Comments submitted after that date should be directed to the City Planning Commission, cpc@lacity.org, for its consideration. Submissions must be in accordance with the CPC Rules and Operating Procedures 4.3: https://planning.lacity.gov/odocument/46ab5b14-f5af-40b3-9a7d-e8e302bbd0f6/ROP_CPC.pdf.

Any media inquiries should be directed to Jamie Francisco at planning.media@lacity.org or (213) 562-8294.