

FACT SHEET

Objective Design Standards for Infill Housing and ADUs in HPOZs

Background

The City of Los Angeles is developing objective design standards (ODS) for infill housing, mixed-use infill, and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs).

The development of the ODS is being funded by a Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 grant received from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). The City's Office of Historic Resources (OHR) contracted with Architectural Resources Group (ARG) to prepare the ODS, which must be completed by the REAP 2.0 grant deadline in December 2026.

The project is a component of the City's larger [Missing Middle LA](#) program, which is addressing housing and design goals in lower-density neighborhoods.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the City creating objective standards?

Several State laws (including, but not limited to, the Housing Accountability Act (HAA), SB 330, SB 35, and AB 2011) have recently passed that are aimed at increasing the construction of additional housing units. These laws limit design review for certain eligible projects to only objective design standards in order to facilitate a streamlined review and entitlement process.

Objective standards allow applicants to know what requirements apply to a proposed project before submitting for city review. This provides a clear, predictable process for



new development, while continuing to ensure that new projects are sensitive and compatible with existing neighborhoods.

While the City's existing HPOZ Preservation Plans contain detailed design guidelines, most of these existing guidelines do not meet the test under State law to qualify as objective standards. This leaves designated historic districts with only minimal standards to shape the design of infill housing projects.

What are objective standards?

California defines an objective standard as a “design standard that involves no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and is uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official before submittal of an application” (Gov. Code § 66300(a)(7)).

Simply put, objective standards must be quantifiable, clear, predictable, fixed, and knowable to all parties involved, in advance. Design standards are different from design guidelines, which may involve some level of subjective interpretation.

How will the ODS for HPOZs relate to existing HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines?

The ODS for HPOZs will be adapted from existing, relevant HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines to ensure that the basis of review for ministerial and discretionary projects within HPOZs are as similar as possible. Like the HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines, the ODS will be grounded in the principles of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as related to compatibility and maintaining a community's architectural character. Additional standards (beyond those adapted from existing guidelines) will be developed as deemed appropriate to address the goals of this project and topics that are identified as part of the community engagement process.

OHR recognizes that the ODS must apply to dozens of HPOZs, each with their own individual character and identity. Therefore, effort will be made to craft standards that stay true to the character of each district and the immediate context of proposed projects.

Will there be any changes to the HPOZ review process?

OHR seeks to minimize changes to the review process after the ODS are adopted. The HPOZ Board will continue to be the decision-maker for rehabilitation projects as permitted by the HPOZ Ordinance and Preservation Plans. The Board will also continue to make recommendations for discretionary review projects.

Where will these standards apply?

The ODS for HPOZs will only apply to the following eligible project types:

- New multi-family residential infill (including eligible streamlined affordable housing projects)
- New mixed-use infill
- New ADUs

The ODS for HPOZs will not apply to:

- Single-family residential infill (other than small lot subdivisions)
- Exclusively commercial projects or other non-residential projects
- Any rehabilitation work to existing primary contributing buildings, which will still be subject to review under the existing HPOZ Preservation Plan guidelines
- Projects in National Register and California Register-listed historic districts

Why will ODS only apply to HPOZs and not other historic districts?

Given the short grant timeline, ODS for all historic resources and districts are not feasible. The project aims to create ODS that may be adapted for use in National Register and California Register historic districts in the future.

What are the other components of the Missing Middle LA program?

A separate effort to develop citywide objective design standards (“Citywide ODS”) is being led by City Planning’s Urban Design Studio and Housing Policy Unit, along with planning consultant AECOM. The Citywide ODS will provide baseline development standards related to topics such as setbacks, height/massing, FAR, parking requirements, and the public realm. As appropriate, these baseline standards will be cross-referenced and/or incorporated into the ODS for HPOZs.

How can I provide input?

Public input will be collected via two virtual community workshops, the first to be held in April 2026, and an [online questionnaire](#) that is available on the City's [website](#).

For additional questions or comments related to the project, please contact Mickie Torres-Gil at micaela.torres-gil@lacity.org.

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

Project Timeline

November 2025:	Project Kick-off
December 2025:	Background Review
January 2026:	Focus Group Listening Sessions
February 2026:	Questionnaire Release (available online)
March 2026:	Informational Presentations to HPOZ Boards
April 2026:	1st Public Workshop 1st Draft of ODS for HPOZs
May - June 2026:	2nd Draft of ODS
June - July 2026:	2nd Public Workshop Final draft of ODS
August - November 2026:	Public Hearings City Planning Commission and City Council consideration
December 2026:	Grant Deadline for Project Completion