



Fact Sheet & FAQ

Summary

Los Angeles City Planning is updating the Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan (CASP) to support the production of more affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing compared to the existing Plan. Key changes include strengthened affordable housing requirements, the establishment of a new Community Benefits Program, provisions that facilitate new affordable housing projects on public land, an overall increase in housing capacity, and a modernized zoning system based on the City's new Zoning Code. The updated CASP will support the City's efforts to accelerate housing production during the housing crisis, while recognizing the diverse needs of the long-standing communities and industries that share this space.

Background

Adopted in 2013, the CASP is a land use document that governs a 600-acre light industrial area in the eastern portion of the City, near the communities of Chinatown, Cypress Park, and Lincoln Heights. The area is interspersed with clusters of residential neighborhoods, commercial uses, City-owned land, affordable housing developments, and open spaces, such as the Los Angeles State Historic Park (also known as the Cornfield). Today, the CASP area is home to about 6,200 residents and there are about 1,800 dwelling units in the CASP, three-quarters of which are in multi-family buildings.

One of the stated goals of the existing CASP is to facilitate the production of more affordable housing for Extremely Low and Very Low Income households. Approximately 48 percent of renter households in the CASP have Extremely Low (\$37,850 annual income for a family of four*) or Very Low (\$63,050 for a family of four*) Incomes, compared to 30 percent with the City of Los Angeles as a whole. However, affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing production within the CASP has been limited. City Planning is updating the CASP's land use regulations so that they can better advance housing opportunities for all Angelenos.

Key Provisions of the CASP Update

The CASP Update introduces new provisions that incentivize on-site affordable housing units, incentivize other community benefits, and improve the clarity and transparency of regulatory standards. The feedback of stakeholder groups, including affordable housing developers, community organizations, and City departments, during the initial outreach process, as well as background research and economic analysis, informed these proposed changes.

*As of August 1, 2023.

1. A New Community Benefits Program

The updated CASP introduces a new Community Benefits Program to incentivize the production of affordable housing and to increase access to new public open space and community facilities. The Community Benefits Program has a two-level structure that prioritizes affordable housing first.

Level 1 of the Community Benefits Program requires that a percentage of housing units within a new residential project be set aside as affordable housing (or paid, in lieu), in exchange for an increase in allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) above the project site's base Maximum FAR. The set-aside percentages under this first level of the Community Benefits Program are shown below in Figure 1. For example, a new residential development could qualify for this first level of the Community Benefits Program by setting aside a minimum of 15% of all dwelling units for Very Low Income households.

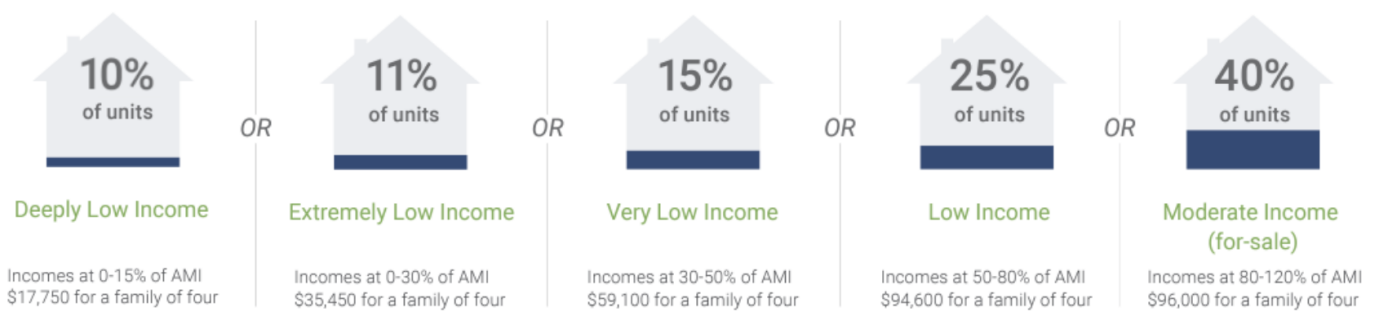


Figure 1. Community Benefits Program, Level 1 Requirements.

Under Level 1 of the Community Benefits Program, at least 20% of the total dwelling units in a residential project must be two bedrooms or greater, to ensure a mix of unit sizes for families. Projects that utilize Level 1 are also automatically eligible for up to three incentives relating to building width, lot coverage, lot width, and floor area averaging, to enhance the feasibility of providing these affordable housing units.

Level 2 of the Community Benefits Program focuses on facilities and services that help make communities healthy and prosperous. Once a residential development project meets the Level 1 affordable housing requirements the project may obtain additional FAR, up to the maximum Bonus FAR, by providing publicly-accessible open space or on-site community facilities. Eligible community facilities include schools, libraries, social services, community health clinics, or daycare facilities. The Plan also introduces a new type of community benefit, where space set aside at below market rent for community-serving small and/or legacy businesses would be considered a community facility.

Alternatively, a project may obtain additional FAR, up to the maximum Bonus FAR, by providing additional affordable housing under Level 2 of the Community Benefits Program. Non-residential projects could access bonus floor area through the public open space and community facilities incentives.

The new Community Benefits Program would generate significantly more affordable housing, open space, and community facilities, than under the existing CASP. As shown in Figure 2, the Level 1 incentive will require four times the affordable housing for Very Low Income households compared to the current CASP Affordable Housing Bonus (Strategy B). The Community Benefits Program will also replace the CASP's existing Transfer of FAR program to ensure that public benefits are provided on-site. The Community Benefits Program is further augmented by numerous changes to the CASP's land use and development provisions, in an effort to better facilitate different forms of housing production.



Figure 2. Existing CASP vs. Community Benefits Program.

2. Facilitating New Affordable Housing Projects, Including on Public Land

The CASP Update would facilitate 100 percent affordable housing projects and, for the first time in the CASP, allow for permanent supportive housing by-right on sites that are owned by government agencies and generally used as government facilities today. These proposed changes would significantly expand the area where affordable housing could be built in the CASP.

Currently, the CASP limits housing to no more than 90 percent of a project's floor area in the Urban Village zone, and no more than 15 percent of a project's floor area in the other CASP zones, to ensure a mix of uses within a building. The updated CASP would exempt 100 percent affordable housing and permanent supportive housing projects from any requirement to provide non-residential floor area, greatly enhancing the financial feasibility of such projects.

3. An Increase in Housing Capacity

The CASP Update incorporates changes that would increase the capacity for affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing within the Plan Area.

For example, the updated CASP would allow projects that are up to 100 percent residential on properties designated as Urban Village, compared to 90 percent under the current regulations. The updated CASP would also increase the amount of land designated as Urban Village, the most housing-permissive zone within the CASP, from approximately 90 acres (19 percent of land area) to approximately 132 acres (28 percent of land area), which would increase the capacity of housing in the area, while still retaining land for employment and open space.

The proposed Plan would permit the types of light industrial uses that are generally compatible with residential uses and would not permit heavy industrial uses. New zoning standards would introduce buffering, distancing, and screening requirements when industrial and residential or other sensitive uses are located near each other.

4. A Modernized Zoning System Based on the City's New Zoning Code

To enhance the clarity, consistency, and transparency of the CASP's regulations, the CASP Update adopts a new zoning structure based on the City's proposed new Zoning Code (Chapter 1A of the Los Angeles Municipal Code). The updated CASP would draw from and reference the definitions, processes, and general standards of the new Zoning Code, while continuing to be a document separate from the Downtown and Northeast Los Angeles Community Plans.

The existing zoning standards of the CASP have been transposed to a system of Form Districts, Frontage Districts, Development Standards Districts, Use Districts, and Density Districts that are unique to the CASP but consistent with the zoning districts established by the new Zoning Code. Wherever today's CASP contains redundant standards, such as those that already exist in other regulations (e.g., the Green Building Code and the new Zoning Code), they have been removed to improve ease of implementation and ensure consistency with Citywide standards. This approach ensures that the regulatory intent of the original CASP continues to apply to development projects and means that as Citywide standards are created or updated, to reflect for example advancements in technology or our understanding of the impacts of climate change, they will now also apply to projects in the CASP. The more consistent and objective standards of the updated CASP will reduce ambiguity and ensure its provisions can be meaningfully applied.

For more information on the proposed updates to the CASP, please see the Frequently Asked Questions on the following page.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the CASP?

Adopted in 2013, the CASP is a land use document that governs a 600-acre (1 square mile) largely industrial area home to about 6,200 people in the eastern portion of the City, near the communities of Chinatown, Cypress Park, and Lincoln Heights, and along the Los Angeles River. The CASP established new zoning regulations to support the growth of new mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, while also retaining land for industrial and other employment uses. Among its numerous policy goals, a priority of the CASP is to facilitate the production and continued provision of affordable housing for Extremely Low Income and Very Low Income households.

Why is the City updating the CASP to support housing?

The limited supply of available housing units (less than one percent residential vacancy in the CASP), together with demand for housing in the greater area, has led to rising housing costs and the potential displacement of existing low-income households unable to afford increased rent. Los Angeles City Planning is updating the CASP to support the production of more affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing, which will help relieve housing pressures in the greater CASP area and the City.

What are the key components of the CASP Update?

The CASP Update includes a new Community Benefits Program with strengthened affordable housing requirements; updated zoning that will support more affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing, including on publicly owned land; and updated development standards aligned with the City's proposed new Zoning Code that provide more clarity and reduce redundancy compared to the CASP today.

How does the CASP Update support affordable housing production?

For the first time, the CASP would allow 100% affordable housing and permanent supportive housing projects by-right in all three of the CASP's Use Districts (Urban Village, Urban Innovation, and Urban Center), exempting such projects from otherwise having to include a mix of non-residential uses. These proposed changes would significantly expand the area where affordable housing projects could be built in the CASP. The proposed Plan would also streamline the approval of affordable and permanent supportive housing on sites that are owned by government agencies and generally used as government facilities today.

The CASP Update would also increase the amount of land designated as Urban Village from 90 acres (19 percent of land area) to 132 acres (28 percent of land area) to expand where mixed-income housing could be built, while still retaining land for employment uses and open space. The zoning changes would be reinforced by a new Community Benefits Program to spur the production of significantly more affordable units than under current incentives. Refinements to existing development standards would reduce ambiguity and help further improve the feasibility of housing projects in the area.

While these changes would altogether facilitate housing production, the CASP Update does not increase the maximum allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of today. In other words, the updated CASP would continue to have the same limitations on building size relative to the size of a parcel as the existing CASP.

How does the CASP Update promote housing stability?

The CASP Update will support the creation of new affordable, mixed-income, and permanent supportive housing units to relieve the upward pressure on rent levels and to expand housing opportunities for low-income residents. The new Community Benefits Program will require four times the amount of affordable housing compared to the existing incentive zoning and for the first time will address Deeply Low Income households (0 to 15 percent of Area Median Income) who are most vulnerable to rising housing costs. To minimize both the direct and indirect displacement risks of new housing, the CASP Update incorporates a zoning strategy that sites new Urban Village zoned areas away from long-established residential neighborhoods that do not have covenanted affordable housing protections.

How are the boundaries changing with the CASP Update?

The CASP Update includes revised boundaries that exclude parcels that currently do not have CASP zoning to clarify the non-applicability of the Specific Plan on those parcels. It would also exclude the few parcels located within the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan Area. The Update would exclude the following types of parcels from the CASP:

- Existing C2-zoned properties;
- Existing RD1.5- and RD2-zoned properties;
- Existing CM-zoned parcels; and
- Existing GW-zoned parcels located within the Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan Area.

The total land area of the Specific Plan would decrease from approximately 600 acres to approximately 560 acres (7 percent reduction). Properties no longer within the CASP boundaries would continue to retain their existing RD1.5, RD2, CM, or C2 zones.

How does the updated CASP support industrial uses and jobs?

A focus of the current CASP is to retain land uses that support employment. The updated CASP continues to prioritize industrial and commercial uses in the Urban Innovation and Urban Center Use Districts. The updated CASP would establish a minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of industrial, commercial, or other job-producing uses for new projects within those Use Districts, before any housing is allowed. One-hundred percent restricted affordable housing and permanent supportive housing projects would be exempt from this requirement.

The updated CASP would continue to permit light industrial uses, including in the Urban Village Use District, that are generally compatible with residential uses and would not permit heavy industrial uses. New zoning standards would introduce buffering, distancing, and screening requirements when industrial and residential or other sensitive uses are located near each other. Additionally, the Community Benefits Program of the updated CASP

introduces a new type of community benefit that incentivizes setting aside space within a development project for community-serving and/or legacy businesses at below market rents.

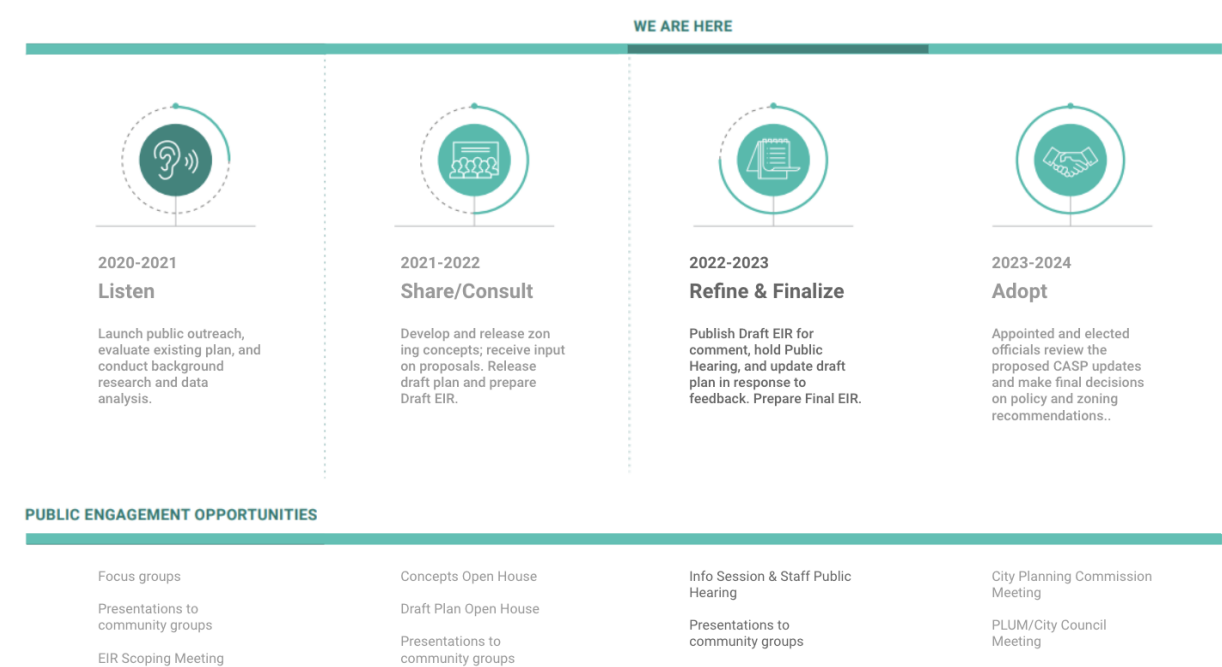
What is the timeline for this process?

Los Angeles City Planning completed its initial review of the CASP in Spring 2021. During this phase, City Planning held focus groups with community stakeholders to affirm the values that should guide the work program, as well as with both affordable and market-rate developers to evaluate potential barriers to housing production in the Specific Plan area. A [virtual Scoping Meeting](#) was held in April 2021, including a presentation and Q&A session, in conjunction with the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) [Notice of Preparation](#) (NOP).

Following this initial phase, work began on drafting proposed Specific Plan updates; key zoning concepts, proposed changes, and maps were shared during the [November 2021 virtual Open House meeting](#). A [Preliminary Draft](#) of the updated CASP was released in November 2022, followed by an [Open House in December 2022](#) to acquaint members of the public with the draft and answer questions.

The [Draft EIR](#) for the CASP Update was published on July 20, 2023, for a 60-day public comment period, together with an updated [Summer 2023 Draft](#). On September 27, 2023, City Planning will hold an Information Session and Virtual Public Hearing to provide a formal opportunity for the public to comment on the CASP Update. The public hearing will be used to collect public comment to help inform a staff recommendation report to the City Planning Commission, which will consider the item on December 7, 2023. Following the City Planning Commission's consideration of the CASP Update, the City Council will have an opportunity to adopt the Specific Plan and related zoning and land use updates.

Plan Process Timeline



How can the public engage with the City in this process?

As part of the update to the CASP, Los Angeles City Planning will consult with local organizations, residents, businesses, housing and development professionals, and other stakeholders. Engagement will be hosted in a variety of forums including focus groups, open houses, presentations to Neighborhood Councils and other community groups, informational sessions, a public hearing, and City Planning Commission meeting.

Interested stakeholders and organizations are encouraged to sign up for email updates on our website to stay informed and involved. More information on the proposed updates to the CASP, including recordings of virtual meetings and presentations, can all be found at Planning4LA.org/casp-update.

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