

Background – Proposed Motion to Request Revision of the LAMC/Zoning Recommended to the WRAC Board by the WRAC LUPC

WRAC Land Use and Planning Committee

June 12, 2023

Motion: The ____ NC/CC requests that the City revises the LAMC/Zoning to be implemented in Community Plan updates, Westside Transit Neighborhood Plans and TOC/Density Bonus ordinances:

Infrastructure Planning/Monitoring:

In order to accommodate changes in anticipated population growth, the Community Plan has a theoretical maximum land use and population capacity greater than the projected development likely to occur during the Community Plan period. The Framework Element of the General Plan commits the Department of City Planning to develop a monitoring system and prepare an annual report on growth and infrastructure, to be submitted to the City Planning Commission, Mayor, and City Council.

In the 5th year following plan adoption (and every five years thereafter), the Planning Dept. shall report to the City Planning Commission on the relationship between population, employment, housing growth, and plan capacities. If growth has occurred faster than projected, a revised environmental impact analysis will be prepared and appropriate changes recommended to the Community Plan. These plan and zoning changes shall be submitted to the Planning Commission, Mayor, and City Council, as specified in the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

- Policies 16-2.1 No increase in density shall be effected by zone change, plan amendment, subdivision, or any other discretionary action, unless the decision-makers . . .adopt findings with regard to infrastructure adequacy as part of their action on discretionary approvals of projects which could result in increased density or intensity.
- Policy IV-4: Coordinate a program for locating and phasing public facilities to meet existing and future needs.

Incentives:

1. Incentives for front and back setback reductions cannot be combined as 1 incentive (it is allowed now). Each setback shall be a separate incentive. The setbacks shall be expanded/ lengthened in areas to accommodate trees (i.e. notches). Or setback reduction is for only 75% of the building length, so trees can be planted.
2. Incentives for each side yard reduction must be separate (cannot be combined as 1 incentive). Each setback shall be a separate incentive.

Landscape ordinance:

1. No part of the front yard may be paved over for parking spaces. The only pavement may be for a 5 ft walkway to the front door, and a driveway that may be as wide as a 2-car garage (it may not be as wide as a 3-car garage, that must be flared). 50% of the front yard may be paved only for a circular driveway (this is to correct the DBS's wrong interpretation that 50% of the entire front yard may be paved over for any reason, especially an extra parking spot).
2. Street tree preservation shall be prioritized in the right-of-way.

Development standards/zoning:

1. General: Development standards are maximums, and the design of the building may cause the project to be less than the maximum.
 - a. The city shall not be mandated to issue development waivers so that a project can achieve maximum density, height, shortest setbacks, etc. just so more units can be stuffed onto a site.
 - b. If a project must have shorter setbacks to accommodate trees, then the standard must be reduced.
 - c. If a building is entitled to 100 units, they may build 100 studios. If the developer chooses to build large 4,000-sf units that require a higher FAR and shorter setbacks and reduced open space via development waivers, those waivers shall not be issued. The developer may reduce the size of individual units in order to comply with development standards.
2. Setbacks/ yards:
 - a. Front yard: Must be 50% flat and usable open space.
 - i. Front yard must comply with underlying zone in all cases. No shortened 5-ft. building line for apartments along large streets (as Expo Plan allows).
 - b. Parking is prohibited in all setbacks, only driveways that provide direct access to garage and right-of-way are allowed.
 - c. Rear setback shall be measured from rear property line for all parcels (including alleys).
 - i. Justification:
 1. A USC study determined that Los Angeles has lost 30-50% of its tree canopy in recent years because these large projects replace smaller projects.
 - a. <https://news.usc.edu/120872/mass-produced-dwellings-home-expansion-reduce-l-a-areas-residential-green-cover/>
 2. City's new Resilience Plan: Increase equitable tree canopy coverage by 2028.
3. Street/ right-of-way:
 - a. 1 tree every 20 linear ft. of frontage.
 - b. Landscaped parkway of 4 ft. minimum size.
 - i. Justification:
 1. A USC study determined that Los Angeles has lost 30-50% of its tree canopy in recent years because these large projects replace smaller projects.

2. City's new Resilience Plan: Increase equitable tree canopy coverage by 2028.

4. Landscaping:

- a. 4 trees must be planted on for each 5,000 sf of land (or 1 tree / 2,000 sf for larger sites). They must be planted in a 7 x 7 x 7 ft area of soil so roots can grow, and the canopy can grow sufficiently to provide real shade. The canopy must have a 15 x 15 x 15 ft area to grow.
 - i. The trees cannot be planted on top of parking garages, because the roots cannot grow down.
 - ii. The trees cannot be planted in planters with stormwater filtering aggregate (not soil, but charcoal and other materials that are not organic and do not nourish root growth).
 - iii. If setbacks must increase to allow this, so be it. Transformers, stormwater filtering planters, and other equipment must be built around them, and shown on site plans at the first stage of Planning or DBS review.
- b. Removal of trees with 6-8-inch caliper or larger shall be replaced at 2 to 1 ratio to encourage developers to preserve mature trees (especially fruit trees, which often die when transplanted).
 - i. Dept. of Urban Forestry shall publicize fruit trees that are proposed for removal, so neighbors can transplant them.
- c. Trees must be planted in the ground and have :
 - i. 8 cubic yards of soil (7 x 7 x 7 ft.) for root growth.
 - ii. 10 x 10 ft. open to the sky for canopy growth.
 1. Justification: Most new apartments have 80-90% lot coverage with little or no usable, flat open space for recreation, as the Community Plan requires. The yards are either tall planters, in which trees cannot grow because of the poor and shallow soil (for stormwater retention) or small concrete areas with limited greenery. Trees can barely grow in planters, and must have realistically have 10 x 10 ft. surface areas and 7 ft. soil depth to grow a decent canopy and height.

5. Open space:

- a. Minimum of 75% of open space must be flat and usable for recreation, and maximum of 25% space may be for planters (15% must be landscape planters with maximum wall height of 2.5 ft.).
 - i. Stormwater planters (which have walls of 4 ft.) cannot fill up open space and make it un-usable. Only shorter landscape planters can count as open space.
 - ii. Justification:
 1. Maximum landscape planter height of 2.5 ft. will allow seating.
 2. Drywells and cisterns can be used for stormwater collection.
- b. Open space in R3 zones and higher shall be at ground level or podium level.

Summary of issue: The City's zoning code creates tall, fat buildings, and has few codified requirements that produce nice, pretty, attractive facades.

The resulting buildings are stucco cubes and aesthetics that clash with existing, older, pretty architecture.

The City has no gray area or flexibility that allow its departments to mandate nicer designs. All design decisions must be codified with specific numbers (i.e. distances, heights).

Justification: The City has mediocre design requirements, and as a result, most apartments are stucco cubes with little articulation and mediocre design.

Few neighborhoods in Los Angeles have Design Review Boards, and their authority is limited to mandate revisions that create only nicer aesthetic designs.

In Pasadena, for example, all projects must be vetted by the Design Review Board, which has the authority to mandate design changes.

Impact on region: All NCs will be affected because these proposed changes to the LAMC (along with Westside TNPs and Comm Plans) are for all parcels in the city.

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