

**Background/Supplement to (Revised) Motion Recommended by
WRAC LUPC to the WRAC Board: Request to Revise the LAMC/Zoning**

Background

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 allows 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 NC/CCs will be affected because these proposed changes to the LAMC (along with Westside TNPs and Comm Plans) are for all parcels in the city.

Supplement

Proposed Development Standards/Zoning:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

4. 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% may 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.
 - i. Rooftop decks are allowed, but may not substitute for ground level or podium level open space.
 - 1. Justification: Roof decks are poor substitutes, because children cannot be supervised, and elderly or handicapped persons have difficulty in climbing up to the roof, when yards can be placed at ground-level or podium-level.

5. Stepbacks:

- a. Stepbacks of 15 ft. shall be required for the 3rd level and above [from Westside Multifamily Q Conditions].

6. Massing:

- a. For buildings with 150 ft. length along the frontage, 1 courtyard/break open to the front and open the sky is required of 20 ft. width and 40 ft. depth (starting at ground or 1st level) [from Westside Multifamily Q Conditions].
- b. Active land uses on the ground-level frontage with direct connection to sidewalks (instead of parking garages that create dead space).
 - i. Justification: Active uses, especially apartments with direct access via front doors and a real yard, are integral elements of “defensive 3 design” and “natural surveillance” that deter crime (per LAPD Design Out Crime Manual).

7. Zoning:

- a. C2 development standards may not blend into adjacent R2 parcels (repeal section of LAMC).
 - i. Justification: When C2 projects and their high density encroach into R2 zones, 5-story apartments can be built next to 2-3-story duplexes, which ruins the character of the neighborhood.
- b. FAR and Height Districts shall be on a sliding scale (whichever is lower) and be in relation to each other (i.e. taller height has more FAR, and lower height has less FAR – currently high FARs are allowed for both short and tall heights). And developers can add affordable housing to increase:
 - i. RD 1.5 = 1.75. [new density district is “15”]
 - ii. R3, RAS3 = 2.0. [new density district is “8”]
 - iii. R4, RAS4 = 2.2. [new density district is “4”]
 - iv. HD-1: 6.0, no height limit.
 - v. HD-1L: 3.0, 6 levels for commercial, 75 ft.
 - vi. HD-1VL: 2.25, 3 levels for commercial, 45 ft.
 - vii. HD-1XL: 2.0, 2 levels for commercial, 30 ft.
 - viii. Justification: 3.0 FAR allows for a 6-8-story to be built and results in no open space at ground- or podium-level. A 4-5-story building needs only 2.2-2.4 FAR. A 4- or 5-story building with 3.0 FAR increases to 3.35 FAR and results in a stucco cube with no open space