

Zoning Code Update Frequently Asked Questions

What is zoning? Why is it important?

Zoning is the City's rules for how land can be used and developed. The zoning code assigns properties a designation, like single-family residential or commercial with standards such as density, setbacks, parking, lot coverage and overall building size.

Why do we need to rewrite the City's current Zoning Code?

The City's comprehensive Zoning Code Update implements the City's General Plan Land Use Element, which was last updated and adopted in 2013. General Plans serve as an overall guide for how a City will grow and develop. The La Cañada Flintridge General Plan includes seven other elements: Open Space/Recreation, Conservation, Safety, Circulation, Noise, Air Quality and Housing.

Also, the Zoning Code has not been comprehensively updated since the City incorporated in 1976. The intention is that the updated Zoning Code will provide a code that is more user friendly, understandable and will provide diagrams and graphics to explain difficult concepts.

What is the Housing Element, and how does it relate to the Zoning Code?

The Housing Element is one of the State-mandated components of the General Plan. The Housing Element includes policies that promote housing production within the City and strategies to help meet the community's housing needs. In La Cañada Flintridge, these strategies are being implemented through the comprehensive Zoning Code Update. Through this process, portions of the Zoning Code, specifically the standards that apply to the "Downtown Village" area were revised to allow enough units at densities that meet the goals of the Housing Element and effectively enable housing production within the city.

Do state laws such as Density Bonus or the Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act (Senate Bill 79) impact how the Zoning Code is used?

Yes, California law generally supersedes local zoning regulations when the two conflict. In recent years, the State has adopted numerous housing laws aimed at increasing housing production and addressing the statewide housing shortage. As a result, there may be portions of the Zoning Code that fall out of compliance with future state law. In these cases, state law would prevail. However, the Zoning Code is periodically updated, outside of the comprehensive Zoning Code Update process, to bring the City's rules into compliance with state law, as needed.

A comprehensive Zoning Code Update remains essential. Beyond ensuring consistency with State law, the update provides an opportunity to clarify existing regulations, modernize development standards, eliminate ambiguities and improve the Code's organization and usability.

What are some of the general changes associated with the Zoning Code Update?

The Zoning Code Update:

- Reorganizes and reformats the document to make it easier for all users;
- Addresses certain development topics that are currently regulated but where additional consideration is warranted;
- Responds to issues and concerns that have been identified by the City Council, Planning Commission, Staff and the public;

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- Consolidates, clarifies and streamlines permit and approval processes;
- Expands the number of definitions;
- Addresses state and federal planning-related laws.

How will the new Zoning Code be different?

Parts of the existing code that have worked well will be carried over to the new code. Additional provisions will be added to bring the code into compliance with state law and to more closely reflect the intent of the City's General Plan. The content will be organized differently and will be written in simple, non-technical language. Ambiguous and contradictory provisions will be eliminated and many new graphics will be added to the code.

Are there opportunities for public involvement during the Zoning Code Update?

Yes, the first public review draft was released October 28, 2019 and public hearings before the Planning Commission started February 1, 2020. There were subsequent public review drafts released on June 30, 2024, June 25, 2026 and August 12, 2026 all followed by Planning Commission meetings, open to the public, to discuss and review.

Comments can be submitted directly to the Zoning Code website (<https://cityoflcf.org/zoningupdate/>) or to the Director of Community Development at skoleda@lcf.ca.gov. All comments received will be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

At the end of the Planning Commission hearings, the Commission will make a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of the Zoning Code. This recommendation will be reviewed by the City Council during a public hearing(s), which provides additional opportunities for the public to comment on the Zoning Code.

What can I expect from the public hearing process?

A Public Hearing Notice will be published in the Outlook Valley Sun at least 20-days prior to each public hearing and an agenda report will be posted on the City's website (<https://lcf.ca.gov/city-clerk/agenda-minutes/>) approximately one week prior to the public hearing.

At the end of the public hearing process, the Planning Commission will adopt a resolution, making a recommendation to the City Council on the adoption of the draft Zoning Code. The City Council will then review the draft Zoning Code, the recommendation of the Planning Commission and any modifications proposed.

Will my comments be incorporated into the Zoning Code Update?

Comments received from the public and the Planning Commission will be incorporated into a matrix, which will be presented to the City Council along with the Zoning Code update. However, a majority of the Planning Commission (generally 3 of the 5 Commissioners) have to agree with proposed changes for them to be included within the matrix. This is consistent with the process that occurred for the preparation and adoption of the City's General Plan. If your comment is not included with the Planning Commission recommendation, there will be another opportunity to comment when the draft Zoning Code is reviewed by the City Council during public hearings.

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When will the new Zoning Code be adopted?

It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will recommend that the City Council adopt the draft Zoning Code during the September 10, 2026, hearing. After that, the City Council will consider the draft Zoning Code and make revisions it deems appropriate.

What is my property zoned; how do I find out?

A Zoning Map is being prepared and will identify a zone designation for all parcels within the City of La Cañada Flintridge. In addition, those parcels outside of the City's current City boundary, but within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), will be assigned a "Pre-Zone" designation. A SOI is a "plan for the probable physical boundaries and service areas of a local agency" as determined by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The Los Angeles County LAFCO established the SOI for the City and is generally the territory which the City is expected to eventually annex.

Will the Zoning designation of my property change?

A new zoning map will be prepared as part of the project. It is possible that the Zoning designation of various properties will change, but per State law, the Zoning designation must be consistent with the General Plan Land Use Map.

What is the number after the zone (e.g. R-1-5000)?

Generally, if the number is < 100, this is the minimum required net lot area in acres. If the number is > 100, this is the minimum required net lot area in square feet.

What are some of the proposed changes to the R-1 (Single-family) zone?

- Maximum building height, setbacks, and allowable floor area are not changing.
- Minimum lot dimensions are now included for the first time.
- Allowable uses within single-family residential zones are not changing.
- New exhibits have been added to help explain standards for retaining walls, light wells, fence heights, and gates.
- New limits on basements are included.

Besides the development standards for each zone, are there other special requirements?

In addition to the basic zone, both general and special regulations may further regulate the property. These requirements are, generally, in addition to the basic zone regulations.

General Regulations include, but are not limited to:

- Grading
- Mechanical equipment
- Outdoor lighting
- Preservation and protection of trees on private property
- Trails
- Off-Street Parking

Special Regulations include, but are not limited to:

- Hillside Development

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- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Alcoholic Beverage Sales
- Animal Keeping
- Cottage Food Operations
- Home Occupations
- Outdoor Dining, Vending or Display

My property used to have a different zone designation than it does now. Can I build under the old Zoning rules?

Generally, no. Any new building permit filed after a zoning change must comply with the zoning regulations that are in place at that time. However, after a zoning change, any legally constructed existing building is considered “legal non-conforming” (commonly referred to as “grandfathered”) and is afforded special rights to repair and rebuild in the event of damage or destruction. Chapter 11.5.03 of the Updated Zoning Code addresses legal non-conforming uses and buildings.

How will changes to the Zoning Code affect me?

If you do not intend to significantly improve your property, the Zoning Code revisions will have limited impact on your property. The updated Zoning regulations come into effect when you want to make an improvement that would require a development application.

How can I stay informed?

- Continue to monitor this website for updates. Check back regularly, as the topics and dates are subject to change depending on the amount of time it takes to address each topic at any given meeting.
- Follow the work of the Planning Commission and attend their meetings to observe what is being discussed. Presentations given during the Planning Commission meetings will be posted on the Zoning Code Update website (<https://cityoflcf.org/zoningupdate/>) after each meeting.
- Finally, if you have any general or specific questions, be sure to contact the Planning Division at (818) 790-8881.