

Zoning Code Update Frequently Asked Questions

What is zoning? Why is it important?

Zoning regulates land use, density, setbacks, parking, lot coverage, building size and is the means to implement the City's General Plan adopted in 2013.

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

The City adopted a General Plan in 2013, which is the official guide for the physical development of the City and the foundation for land use planning, including zone, subdivisions and public improvements. As required by state law, the Zoning Code and other land development regulations need to be consistent with the General Plan. It is important to remember that 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 are some of the general changes that can be expected?

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;
- 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?

Much about the new code will 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?

Public hearings before the Planning Commission on the Zoning Code Update will start February 1, 2020. A preliminary schedule of hearings, and the topics to be discussed at each hearing, is posted on the City's website (<https://cityoflcf.org/zoningupdate/>). It is anticipated that the public hearings before the Planning Commission will be held through the end of 2020.

If you cannot attend any of the public hearings, you can submit a comment directly from 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.

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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?

The City has posted a preliminary schedule of 15 hearings before the Planning Commission on the Zoning Code Update. The public hearings will start on February 1, 2020 and will generally be held the first Saturday of the month at 10:30 a.m. and the third Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m. All meetings will be held in the City Council Chamber on the first floor of City Hall, One Civic Center Drive, La Cañada Flintridge.

During each meeting, staff and/or the Zoning Code consultant will give a presentation of the topics to be addressed during the meeting. After the presentation, the Planning Commission will ask questions of staff and the consultant, and then allow the public the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments.

Staff and the Zoning Code consultant will answer as many questions as possible from the Planning Commission or public during the meeting. However, those questions that require some research will be answered during the following 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 the public hearings be broadcast?

Staff will record audio of each meeting, but the meeting will not be broadcast. This is consistent with the City Council's recently adopted policy on broadcasting public meetings.

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.

When will the new Zoning Code be adopted?

It is anticipated the Planning Commission will recommend a draft Zoning Code by the end of 2020. After that, the City Council will consider the draft Zoning Code and make revisions it deems appropriate.

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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?

- Introduces a maximum height of 20-feet for a single-story house.
- Amends the 30% roof removal rule where a structure is defined as "new" by increasing the percentage to 50% but includes additions, removals and modifications to roofs.
- Specifically lists mechanical equipment permitted in required setbacks.
- Introduces specific development standards for lightwells.

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
- Parking

Special Regulations include, but are not limited to:

- Hillside Development
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Alcoholic Beverage Sales
- Animal Keeping
- Cottage Food Operations
- Home Occupations

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- Outdoor Dining, Vending or Display

My property used to have a difference 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 11.5.04 of the Zoning Code address legal non-conforming uses and buildings. This chapter has not been completed as of yet and will be workshopped with the Planning Commission and the City Council.

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 web site 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.