

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER STUDY

Prepared by the City of Los Angeles – Department of City Planning
Community Planning Bureau

PROJECT SUMMARY

Introduction

- This study was initiated in response to a flurry of public requests for Interim Control Ordinances (ICO) to temporarily halt mansionization.
- Mansionization is defined in this study as new construction, additions, and remodels on residentially zoned lots that are out-of-scale with the surrounding neighborhood, but which comply with the current City zoning regulations.
- The goal is to develop a proposed ordinance that would address key issues raised by various communities.
- Current proposal applies to Single-Family Zoned lots **not** located in Hillside or Coastal Zone areas.
(R1, RS, RE9, RE11, RE15, RA, RE20, and RE40)
- Hillside Areas will be addressed in the next phase of this study.



Proposed Ordinance

The regulations would address massing, scale, and size concerns regarding construction of, and additions to single-family dwellings (SFD) by proposing the following citywide code amendments:

- A new definition of Single-Family Residential Floor Area to address SFD massing concerns:
 - The area within the exterior walls of a building used primarily for single-family residential purposes on a property zoned RA, RE, RS, or R1, and not located in a Hillside Area or Coastal Zone.
 - When a property is developed for other uses the existing Floor Area definition applies.
 - Any portion of a building with ceiling height greater than 14 ft counts as twice the area.
 - Any attic, or portion thereof, with ceiling height more than 7 ft is counted.
 - The following are NOT counted towards the total area:
 1. First 400 sq-ft of existing or proposed garage; the area in excess counts.
 2. Detached structures used for storage purposes and not for parking, no greater than 200 sq-ft; the total area of these structures cannot exceed 400 sq-ft.
 3. Porches and patios open on at least 2 sides, not being used for parking purposes.
 4. The first 100 sq-ft of any portion of a building with ceiling height greater than 14 ft not be counted; a one-time allowance.
- A new definition of Base Floor used for determining Proportional Stories Bonus compliance.

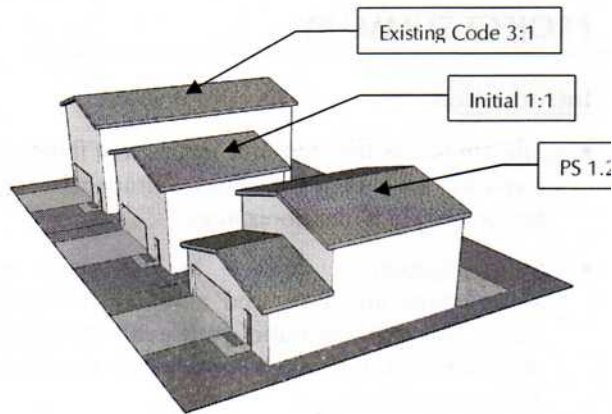
NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER STUDY

Prepared by the City of Los Angeles – Department of City Planning
Community Planning Bureau

- A reduction of the existing Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of single-family zones from 3:1 to a base of 1:1.

Note: FAR in the City of Los Angeles is determined by using a ratio of Floor Area to Buildable Area. Buildable Area is the lot area minus the required yard setbacks.

- The creation of a Proportional Stories FAR Bonus:
 - Grants a FAR Bonus of 25% if other stories are not greater than 2/3rds of the Base Floor.
- Creation of a Single-Story Height District with a maximum height of 18 feet for single-family residential zones only. The Planning Department is **not** proposing to apply this new Height District to any neighborhood.
- For properties located in Specific Plan areas or Historic Preservation Overlay Zones, the more restrictive requirements would prevail.



Note: A copy of the draft ordinance will be made available at the Public Hearings.

Open House & Public Hearings

Two Open Houses and Public Hearings are scheduled for:

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Marvin Braude Building
6262 Van Nuys Blvd., Room 1A
Van Nuys, CA 91401

Open House: 5 - 6:00 PM

Public Hearing: 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Thursday, March 29, 2007

Henry Medina West Los Angeles
Parking Enforcement Facility
11214 West Exposition Blvd.,
Second Floor, Roll Call Room
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Open House: 5 - 6:00 PM

Public Hearing: 6:30 - 8:00 PM

If you have any further questions regarding the hearings or the proposed ordinance, please feel free to contact Erick Lopez at (213) 978-1243 or Anita Cerna at (818) 374-5042.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is Mansionization a problem?

Mansionization is defined as new construction or additions on residentially-zoned lots that are out-of-scale with the surrounding neighborhood, but which comply with current City zoning regulations. Mansionization disrupts neighborhood character by allowing the construction of out-of-scale and box-like structures with limited architectural expression, or articulation of building facades. Ultimately, such large structures can result in a loss of privacy and open space and they create a shadow effect which reduces the amount of direct sunlight on adjacent properties.

Large structures take up more lot area than average homes. Over time this results in a loss of permeable surfaces vital for managing stormwater run-off. In addition, the construction of out-of-scale homes creates the perception of increased density and urbanization in single-family neighborhoods. Mansionization is widespread throughout the City. The proposed measures target the protection of neighborhood character and address the long-term cumulative impacts of Mansionization.

What can I currently build on my property?

The zone (e.g. R1, C2, M) determines land use (e.g. commercial, residential or industrial), minimum lot size, lot dimensions, and setback requirements. The zone for your property can be determined by visiting the Department of City Planning's Zoning Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS) online at <http://zimas.lacity.org>, or by visiting one of the Department's public counters.¹

Once you've determined your zone and height district, please refer to the appropriate zone for the required yard setbacks to determine buildable area and total development potential for your property. The current maximum floor area requirement is three times the buildable area of the lot.

What is the Proposed Citywide Reduction in FAR?

The Citywide reduction in FAR would reduce the current Floor Area Ratio from 3:1 to 1:1 for all single-family zones outside of hillside areas and the coastal zone. For all zones, **the maximum development potential for a one-story single family home will not change.** However, the maximum development potential for a two-story scenario would be reduced. For example, currently in the R-1 zone on a 5,000 square foot lot, a two-story home (up to 28 feet in height) can be built to 4,940 square feet of floor area. Under this proposal, the maximum floor area of a two-story box-like structure at a 28-foot height is 2,470 square feet, and a three-story box-like home at a 33-foot height would be 2,340 square feet. The footprint of the building would be reduced by up to 50 percent. A structure that utilizes the Proportional Stories Bonus would be a little larger (see below).

How does the Proportional Stories Bonus work?

The Proportional Stories Bonus is designed to prevent the construction of homes with limited differentiation between stories on all four sides, or "box-like" structures. To qualify for the Proportional Stories Bonus the second story and subsequent stories would have to be no larger (in area) than two-thirds of the first story area. This would make it impossible to build a single family home with no articulation. Creating a setback on the second story does not limit the design of the building. On the contrary, the Floor Area can be arranged in any way as long as the second story does not encroach on required front, rear, and side yard setbacks, and the second story meets the two-thirds rule. Under

¹ **Downtown Los Angeles** - 201 N. Figueroa Street, 4th Floor, Los Angeles 90012
San Fernando Valley - 6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Room 251, Marvin Braude Constituent Services Center, Van Nuys 91401

this proposal, the maximum floor area of a two-story structure at a 28-foot height is 3,088 square feet, and a three-story home at a 33-foot height would be 2,925 square feet.

Which communities will be most impacted by this proposal?

The proposed ordinance applies to all properties zoned single-family (R1 RA, RE and RS) which are not located in Hillside Areas and the Coastal Zone. Communities that are currently experiencing a high level of Mansionization, especially communities with an existing or proposed Mansionization Interim Control Ordinance, may see the most benefit.

What is a single-story height district?

Currently, the zoning code does not contain a tool to help maintain and protect the height of single-story neighborhoods. If the Neighborhood Character Ordinance is adopted, communities will have the option of requesting a single-story height district designation from the City. This height district would limit new construction to one story within the designated district and set a maximum height of 18 feet for all single-family homes in this district. The designation can be achieved through current rezoning procedures and updates to the Community Plan in that area.

The 18-foot height limit is not expected to limit the design of roofs or create flat roofs. However, the height limit is intended to maintain a consistent maximum height within areas that have been designated a single-story height district. Mezzanines and other similar areas would not be considered an additional story, but would count as floor area.

I am in the process of building a home. Will my project be affected?

The Neighborhood Character Study has not yet been adopted as an ordinance. If your project is currently under construction, none of the proposals presented at this workshop will affect the construction of your home. Any project that is started after the adoption of the proposed ordinance would have to comply with the requirements of the ordinance.

Did the City Planning Department examine other proposals?

Several alternatives were evaluated in the Neighborhood Character Study. However, the proposed ordinance meets the goals established in the Study: the ordinance does not require boards or committees; the proposal minimizes use of City Planning staff to review discretionary cases; and it does not include additional CEQA requirements. The result is a program that is clear, not open to interpretation and ensures that a home is appropriate in scale to its lot size and the surrounding neighborhood.

For more information, please contact Erick Lopez (213) 978-1243 – Erick.Lopez@lacity.org or Anita Cerna (818) 374-5042 -- Anita.Cerna@lacity.org, or visit our website <http://cityplanning.lacity.org>.