

# FACT SHEET

## Landscape and Site Design Ordinance

Los Angeles City Planning is proposing amendments to the City's current Landscape Ordinance to create new Landscape and Site Design objective standards. The new Ordinance responds to emerging research linking public health outcomes with the built environment. Using a performance-based approach, the new Ordinance recalibrates the point-based system in place today to better link site design, climate resilience, livability, and strategies for environmental design. In alignment with [Mayor Bass' Executive Directive \(ED\) Number 7](#), the new Ordinance streamlines implementation and improves interdepartmental coordination.

Initially launched as the [Healthy Buildings, Healthy Places Initiative](#) in 2020, in response to the glaring social and environmental health inequities uncovered during the pandemic, this program implements several goals, policies, and programs identified in the Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles and the 2021-2029 Housing Element. Last year, Planning staff held a series of public listening sessions to share a recommended framework for the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance. In response to public feedback, an innovative approach was developed through an easy-to-use point system that can be adapted to a wide variety of uses, project scales, and settings, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Developed with the expertise of practitioners working at the intersection of health policy, environmental justice, planning, and design, the draft Ordinance provides multiple pathways to advance site design principles that make our streets and sidewalks more walkable, support healthy communities, provide spaces for nature and biodiversity to flourish, and create buildings and places that support positive community interaction. Utilizing the point system, applicants will be able to select from many available standards to meet the design objectives, allowing for maximum design flexibility.

Additionally, the Ordinance supports the provision of additional on-site open space through a Zoning Code amendment to encourage Outdoor Amenity Areas. Partially covered outdoor areas such as lattice roofs, terraces, or balconies would no longer be counted towards Floor Area, removing a barrier that exists today to providing shaded and functional outdoor areas.

## Why is an update necessary and how does it affect procedures?

The Landscape and Site Design Ordinance presents an opportunity to update and enhance the current Landscape Ordinance, implementing process improvements while simultaneously addressing issues of climate, health and equity in site design across our Los Angeles communities. The new ordinance responds to and complements Mayor Bass' recent directive, Executive Directive 7, aimed at streamlining housing production and directing the Planning Department to develop objective design standards for multi-family housing projects to enhance the City's standard of review. While efforts are underway to reduce discretionary reviews and processing times for new housing, this new ordinance will supplement these efforts by establishing clear, achievable design standards, ensuring design quality and sustainability for all projects.

In addition, State housing laws now require California cities to apply objective development standards that are fixed and measurable, instead of relying upon design guidelines. To this end, the proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance replaces the Landscape Ordinance and its lengthy implementation document last updated in 1996 with measurable, verifiable, and knowable objective standards to ensure that buildings and sites support the long-term health of our communities. As with the current Landscape Ordinance, project applications will be reviewed by Planning staff entirely administratively and will not require a public hearing. A user-friendly application portal is under development that will provide predictability for applicants, expedite review of ministerial applications and clearances, and improve enforcement.

Additionally, the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance includes clean-up amendments to sections of the Zoning Code that would be rendered obsolete by the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance, thereby reducing and consolidating project clearances related to landscaping.

## Which projects will be subject to the proposed Ordinance and which are excluded?

The Ordinance applies to new, detached buildings, including by-right and discretionary residential and non-residential construction. Residential buildings subject to the Ordinance are those with five or more dwelling units or guest rooms/efficiency dwelling units. Non-residential buildings subject to this Ordinance include commercial, industrial or hybrid-industrial buildings and construction or reconfiguration of vehicle parking areas; such projects will have a lower point threshold.

Exempted projects include all residential projects with four or fewer units including single-family dwellings and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Also exempted are projects involving existing buildings such as additions, alterations, or changes of use as well as projects involving largely unbuilt land such as public open space, cemeteries, ball fields, and similar uses. For a complete list of exemptions please refer to page 18 of the draft [Ordinance](#).

## How are the Landscape and Site Design Standards organized?

In the Point System, objective design standards are organized into the following three design approaches: Pedestrian-First Design, 360 Degree Design and Climate-Adapted Landscape and Site Design, based upon the City Planning Commission's adopted [Citywide Design Guidelines](#) in effect today.

Under the three design approaches, the objective design standards are further organized under nine categories. Points are assigned through a combination of Mandatory and Elective Standards.

The nine categories are: Pedestrian Circulation, Quality Public Space Linkages, Context Sensitive Design, Screened or Reduced Vehicle Parking, Climate Resilient Buildings, Site Amenities, Conservation, Healthy Soil and Water Quality, and Biodiversity and Habitat.

Within each of the nine categories, each of the standards has an assigned point value based on its effectiveness in meeting the design performance objectives. This system allows for a flexible design approach by only requiring a limited number of Mandatory Standards while providing a wide variety of available Elective Standards that can address site design objectives. To comply with the Ordinance, projects will be required to meet a total of **27 points** with at least **three points per category** and a minimum of **eight Health Related Standards**.

Compliance with the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance will be verified by City Planning's Development Services Centers and will not require additional discretionary planning approvals.

## What Mandatory Standards does the proposed Ordinance include?

Each category identifies one or more corresponding Mandatory Standards. Nine Mandatory Standards are applicable to all projects. Some categories include additional "Mandatory if Applicable" Standards depending on the project type. One example of a Mandatory

Standard that will always be applicable is the requirement for new street trees with each new development. The proposed Mandatory Standards are identified in the [Landscape and Site Design Point System](#) as shown in the example below.

	Points Mandatory	
<b>Tree Disclosure.</b> The applicant has provided a Tree Disclosure Statement (CP-4067) to the Department of City Planning. If after providing the Tree Disclosure Statement it is determined that no Protected Trees, street trees, or Significant Trees trees of 12" diameter or greater are located on-site, no further action is needed.	1	Yes

## What if a project cannot meet one or more of the Mandatory Standards?


In the event a project is unable to meet a Mandatory Standard, the project can provide three substitute Elective Standard points for each unmet Mandatory Standard as an alternative compliance path. The Ordinance allows a maximum of three Mandatory Standards substitutions per project. Only two Mandatory standards cannot be substituted using Elective standards: the street tree requirement, as that standard already provides an alternative option to make in-lieu payments for street trees that cannot be placed in the public right-of-way due to space constraints; and the requirement to plant trees in new surface parking lots. To streamline the calculation of point values, an online calculator tool is being developed which will guide applicants on ways to achieve the point requirements.

## Why is a new Outdoor Amenity Area definition needed?

As part of the broader Healthy Buildings, Healthy Places Initiative, the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance proposes new terminology for covered outdoor spaces that provide amenities such as balconies, terraces and courtyards and exempts such areas from floor area and height calculations provided they meet certain development standards. The new Zoning Code (Chapter 1A) addresses such outdoor spaces, but the current Zoning Code does not yet include enabling language to support these uses, which have become increasingly essential for promoting health and well-being, particularly in the post-pandemic recovery – bridging this gap will help to encourage more functional outdoor areas. Outdoor Dining Areas for restaurants are excluded from this definition, and will need to comply with the City’s Draft AI Fresco Ordinance (Council File [20-1074-S4](#)).

## How does City Planning verify compliance with the proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance and approved plans?

To strengthen compliance with landscape provisions, the Ordinance proposes a two-part verification process. During preliminary approval, at the time of filing an application, the



project will be reviewed for compliance with the required number of points and standards as applicable to the project. After the building is constructed, final compliance verification will require proof of completion of installation as per the approved plans, prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. This is in alignment with the [Certificate of Completion form](#) in use today.

## **How does the proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance relate to Overlays and Specific Plans?**

Where development standards in Specific Plans, Supplemental Use Districts, or other overlays contain similar regulations, these standards may be used to satisfy mandatory and voluntary points. In instances where the provisions of the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance conflict with any provisions of such overlay, the more restrictive provisions will prevail.

## **What are the next steps in the adoption process and who can I contact for additional information?**

The draft Landscape and Site Design Ordinance has now been released for public review and comments are encouraged. City Planning will host a [Public Hearing](#) on July 31 give an overview of the changes being proposed and receive community input. During the next several months, City staff will evaluate the comments received, gather more feedback, and revise the Ordinance, prior to holding a staff-level public hearing.

The public hearing will be another opportunity for the public to offer feedback and testimony on the proposed Ordinance, which City Planning will again evaluate and use to make further revisions to the Ordinance, if necessary. The Ordinance will be presented to the City Planning Commission (CPC) for its recommendation(s) and then proceed to the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee of the City Council, and finally, to the full City Council for adoption.

Please submit questions and comments for the proposed Landscape and Site Design Ordinance to [planning.urbandesign@lacity.org](mailto:planning.urbandesign@lacity.org). Additional information is available on [City Planning's Urban Design Studio web page](#). Join the [email list](#) by selecting "Landscape and Site Design Ordinance" under Current Planning Initiatives to receive updates about this effort and upcoming opportunities to provide feedback.