

### **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 construct 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/search.asp>, or by visiting one of the Department's public counters.<sup>1</sup>

Once you've determined your zone and height district, use the tables provided in the handouts to determine buildable area and total development potential for your property.

#### **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 not within hillside areas or the coastal zone. For all zones, **the maximum development potential for one-story single family homes will not change.** However, the maximum development potential for a two-story single-family home 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 the same two-story home is 2,470 square feet. The footprint of the building would be reduced by 50 percent.

The Planning Department is proposing two discretionary review processes that would allow applicants to exceed the 1:1 Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and regain allowable floor area. The Minor Residential Plan review would allow applicants to build up to a 1.5:1 FAR and the Full Residential Plan review would allow applicants to build up to a 3:1 FAR. For each of these processes the City Planning Department would enforce the Proportional Stories Rule.

#### **How does the Proportional Stories Rule work?**

The Proportional Stories Rule is designed to prevent the construction of homes with limited differentiation between stories on all four sides, or "box-like" structures. The Proportional Stories Rule would require the second story and subsequent stories 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 upper-story

---

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

## NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER STUDY

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

setback. Creating a setback on the second story does not limit the design of the building. On the contrary, the buildable area can be arranged in any way such that 1) the second story does not encroach on required front, rear, and side yard setbacks and 2) the second story meets the two-thirds rule. The Proportional Stories Rule would apply to all single-family homes in the City (excluding Hillside and Coastal areas) and provides a way to equitably address design issues.

### **Which communities will be most impacted by this proposal?**

The proposals presented at this workshop apply to single-family homes citywide, except homes in Hillside areas and the Coastal zone. All homes in the R, RA, RE and RS zones will be affected. Communities that are currently experiencing a high level of Mansionization may see the most benefit.

### **What is a single-story height district?**

Communities 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.

### **Will the proposed 18-foot height limit restrict roof design?**

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.

### **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, which would amend the Zoning Code.

### **What are the procedures and the timeline for the proposed Minor Residential Plan Review and Residential Plan Review?**

The City Planning Department is developing procedures for Residential Plan Review. A precise timeline for a decision for this type of case has not been determined, however, it would likely be 20 working days after filing an application.

### **Did the City Planning Department examine other proposals?**

Several alternatives were evaluated in the Neighborhood Character Study. However, the proposals presented tonight meet the goals to 1) not require boards or committees; 2) minimize use of City Planning staff to review discretionary cases; and 3) not include additional CEQA requirements. The result is a program that is clear, not open to interpretation and tailored to individual homes and the neighborhoods in which they are located.

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