



FACT SHEET

Updated September 1, 2026

Missing Middle LA

Summary

In fall 2025, Los Angeles City Planning launched the ***Missing Middle LA (MMLA)*** program, a new initiative designed to expand the variety of housing options available in the city. The program would update the City's zoning code to encourage the construction of primarily smaller-scale for-sale and rental housing within existing residential neighborhoods.

This policy effort responds to Los Angeles's historically low homeownership rate and well-documented shortage of affordable rental housing. The limited supply of homes that families can afford to rent or buy pushes people away from their families and communities, limits opportunities to build wealth through homeownership, and makes it harder for businesses to attract workers, invest, and create jobs.

The ***Missing Middle LA Program*** will leverage and improve upon recent changes in state law to advance several of the City's housing and urban design policy goals, without altering existing zoning designations. Los Angeles City Planning released the initial draft code amendments in June 2026. Following stakeholder feedback and technical review over the summer, a second draft was released in September 2026. The proposed amendments would expand housing choices by supporting smaller, more attainable homes and housing types such as ADUs, duplexes, townhomes, bungalow courts, and other small-scale subdivisions in zones where residential uses are permitted. Many of these housing forms have a long history in Los Angeles but have become difficult to build under modern zoning and subdivision regulations.

This initiative directly implements key goals of the City's Housing Element and supports Mayor Bass' [Executive Directive 7](#), both of which call for accelerating housing

production and expanding homeownership opportunities as part of the City's broader response to the housing crisis.

Overview

The **Missing Middle LA Program** will streamline the creation of smaller homes, duplexes, condos, and ADUs - expanding housing options for renters, first-time buyers, and downsizers. Major components of the draft code amendments are summarized below.

- **Small-Scale Homes:**
 - Brings the City's 2019 ADU Ordinance up to date with state law.
 - Allows ADUs to be sold separately as condos, per Assembly Bill 1033 (AB 1033).
 - Incorporates City Council direction to expand protections in the City's hillside fire zones.
 - Introduces additional measures to further expand and streamline ADU creation.
 - Codifies Senate Bill 9 (SB 9) Two-Unit Development and Urban Lot Split provisions.
- **Small Lot Subdivisions and Starter Homes:**
 - Updates the City's Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance to require tenant notification and relocation assistance when subdivisions of existing units are proposed.
 - Streamlines the creation of up to 10 lots/homes by incorporating the now in-effect Starter Home Revitalization Act, or SHRA (SB 684/1123).
 - Creates a complementary local SHRA program called the "*Starter Home Bonus Program*" that builds upon the law while requiring adherence to objective design standards, establishing local controls that remain consistent with State law.
 - Promotes townhomes, bungalow courts, and other creative housing typologies wherever residential use is permitted.
- **Objective Design Standards:**
 - In September 2026, Los Angeles City Planning released the Objective Design Standards for Small Lot Homes, which will update and expand the current Small Lot Design Standards to apply to Starter Home Bonus Projects. The standards address citywide policy priorities to create walkable neighborhoods, foster a sense of community, and encourage existing buildings and mature trees to be retained.

- Two Citywide code amendments include:
 - A new Lot Amenity Space requirement for housing developments with fewer than six units, which generally are not subject to the City's existing multifamily usable open space requirements.
 - An amendment to expand the Outdoor Amenity Area provisions of the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance to additional residential zones, including R1 and other lower-density zones. This would allow qualifying outdoor spaces - such as covered patios, porches, balconies, walkways, and similar areas - to be excluded from applicable floor-area and height calculations when they are unenclosed.
- Los Angeles City Planning also released objective design standards for multi-family and infill development for properties located within the City's Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs) in June 2026. Learn more about the [Objective Design Standards](#) for historic districts.
- **Ministerial Subdivision Procedures:**
 - Amendments to Article 13 of Chapter 1A will codify ministerial subdivision pathways required under State law, for SB 9 lot split and SHRA projects, as well as for projects using AB 1033 for the sale of ADUs as condominiums.

Key policy topics and proposed solutions are further detailed below.

Key Topics

Housing Context

Los Angeles has relatively few housing options between detached single-family homes and larger apartment buildings, leaving many Angelenos with limited choices when looking for a smaller home to rent or buy. Since 2020, only 6% of new homes built in Los Angeles have been for-sale, the vast majority of which were detached single-family homes—the City's most expensive housing type.

Missing middle housing can provide important options for many Angelenos, including first-time buyers, multigenerational families, older adults, and homeowners looking to add housing. Limited housing supply and high demand have put housing out of reach for too many families, forcing some to leave the City, live in inadequate or overcrowded

conditions, or endure longer commutes. Homeownership also remains an important pathway to building generational wealth.

In response to the difficult housing context, recent state legislation including AB 1033, the HOME Act (SB 9/450), and the Starter Home Revitalization Act (SB 684/1123) have created new opportunities for ADUs, duplexes, lot splits, and small-scale homeownership projects, particularly for homeowners and smaller builders.

Missing Middle LA would implement these State laws locally without rezoning properties or changing existing zoning designations. The program would establish clear local standards and targeted incentives to support well-designed, neighborhood-scale housing while addressing practical barriers that have made these housing options difficult to create.

Missing Middle Solutions

City Planning is seeking public feedback on two complementary approaches to expand Missing Middle housing. The first focuses on smaller-scale options such as ADUs, duplexes, and homeowner lot splits, including new opportunities for ADUs to be sold separately. The second addresses a somewhat larger scale through Small Lot and Starter Home projects, creating additional opportunities for neighborhood-scale, for-sale housing between a single home and a larger apartment building.

1. Small-Scale Homes

ADU Ordinance Update

ADUs have become one of Los Angeles' most successful tools for adding housing within existing neighborhoods, with more than 45,000 permitted since 2017 and approximately 7,400 permitted in 2025 alone. They require relatively smaller costs and can provide flexible housing for extended families, older adults, young adults, renters, and homeowners.

The proposed ADU Ordinance would bring the City's 2019 regulations into alignment with current State law while creating additional local opportunities. AB 1033 would be implemented to allow qualifying ADUs to be sold separately as condominiums, creating a potentially lower-cost entry point into homeownership while giving existing homeowners another way to access the value of their property.

The ordinance also proposes a local ADU Bonus Program that goes beyond minimum State requirements. It includes new ADU and SB 9 configurations that can create four-unit housing types, an additional Opportunity ADU on qualifying large lots in

higher-opportunity areas, and an Affordable ADU Bonus Program that encourages deed-restricted affordable ADUs in transit-rich and higher-opportunity areas.

HOME Act (SB 9): Two Unit Developments and Urban Lot Splits

The HOME ACt (Senate Bill 9 (SB 9)), enacted in 2021, created a streamlined pathway for qualifying properties in single-family zones to add a second primary home or divide a property into two lots, with up to four units permitted through a lot split. The law includes protections for environmentally sensitive sites, renters, and historic resources, while allowing cities to apply objective local zoning, design, and subdivision standards that apply to other projects in the zone and do not prevent the housing protected by State law, including up to two homes of at least 800 square feet each on each resulting lot.

Missing Middle LA would codify SB 9 into the Zoning Code and replace interim guidance with clearer local standards. The proposed ordinance would make lot splits more practical for homeowners, provide greater flexibility for access, parking, and lot configuration, and create incentives to retain existing homes and mature trees.

Small Lot Subdivisions and Starter Homes

Small Lot Subdivisions (SLS)

Los Angeles created the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance in 2005 to allow individually owned homes on small fee-simple lots in multifamily and commercial zones. The program established alternative standards, including smaller lots and reduced internal setback, to support compact homeownership projects. Although Small Lot development has produced thousands of homes, project filings have declined in recent years.

Missing Middle LA proposes targeted updates rather than a major rewrite of the Small Lot program, primarily to align access, driveway, parking, and subdivision procedures with the new Starter Home framework and to clarify existing administrative requirements.

Starter Home Program

The Starter Home Revitalization Act of 2021 (SHRA), substantially amended by SB 684 and SB 1123, establishes a ministerial pathway for qualifying developments of up to 10 starter homes, depending on lot size, zoning, and project type. Projects are reviewed without discretionary hearings or CEQA review and are subject to eligibility restrictions protecting environmentally sensitive areas, tenants, demolitions, and other specified

sites. SB 1123 expanded eligibility to certain single-family-zoned properties beginning July 2025.

SHRA establishes several key development criteria for qualifying projects, including maximum average home sizes, minimum parcel sizes, guaranteed floor area, relief from frontage requirements, and limits on additional local standards that would apply solely because a project uses SHRA.

Missing Middle LA would codify SHRA locally while addressing practical issues identified during early implementation. The proposed standards provide greater flexibility for access, parking, lot configuration, particularly on constrained sites, while adding incentives to preserve mature trees and historic homes and encouraging housing forms such as bungalow courts and shared underground parking.

The ordinance also proposes a Starter Home Bonus Program for qualifying fee-simple projects that choose to meet updated objective design and map standards. In exchange, projects may increase the number of homes or lots (if made smaller) and other development incentives intended to support smaller, more attainable homes and well-designed neighborhood-scale development.

Proposed Starter Home Bonus Program Incentives	
ADUs / JADUs	Allow one on each lot
Minimum Parcel Size	25% reduction to 450 sq. ft. (multifamily zones) or 900 sq. ft. (single-family zones)
Density Increase	Up to 20% more units/parcels, with fractions rounded up
Minimum Density	Minor methodology difference
Building Height	Additional five feet, plus two feet for sloped roofs (> 50% slope)
Encroachment Plane	Modified plane origin at 24 feet (vs. 20 feet)
Automobile Parking	50% reduction allowed (or 0.5 spaces per unit)
Floor Area Ratio	FAR ≤ 1.25:1; porch exemptions; averaging of floor area is allowed
Front Setbacks	Allow reduced front setbacks based on the site and surrounding development context.

2. Objective Design Standards for Missing Middle Housing

New state and local policies introduced to expedite approval of housing projects increasingly require ministerial approval based on clear and objective standards rather than more subjective design review. The State laws being modified through this work program also have limits on applying standards to these types of projects that don't otherwise apply more generally to other projects in the zone.

Missing Middle LA responds by updating the City's [Small Lot Design Standards](#) and [Small Lot Map Standards](#) to make them clearer, more objective, and better suited to neighborhood-scale housing. Renamed to *Objective Design Standards for Small Lot Homes*, the updated standards will apply to existing Small Lot Subdivisions and projects that opt into the Starter Home Bonus Program. The standards support walkable neighborhoods, usable open space and common areas, and the preservation of existing homes and mature trees, while aligning with the City's new Landscape and Site Design Ordinance.

The program is also introducing two citywide code amendments, the Lot Amenity Space and the Outdoor Amenity Area provisions for all residential zones. For housing projects with fewer than six units, Missing Middle LA introduces a new requirement for a Lot Amenity Space to ensure smaller housing projects provide usable outdoor space. At least 15% of the lot area would be provided as an outdoor area for active or passive recreation, either as private open space on individual lots, or as shared common space within a subdivision. The requirement includes basic standards for minimum dimensions, ground level space and landscaping.

Missing Middle LA is also proposing expanding the recently developed Outdoor Amenity Area provisions to all residential zones. The provisions encourage partially covered or enclosed outdoor space such as porches, patios, balconies, and other shaded outdoor areas by allowing qualified spaces to be excluded from certain zoning regulations. The definition of Outdoor Amenity Areas along with the accompanying set of development standards were recently introduced for multifamily residential zones as part of the Landscape and Site Design Ordinance.

The program is also working with the Department's Office of Historic Resources to develop objective design standards for infill housing, mixed-use development, and ADUs in Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs). This effort includes two new documents—the Objective Design Standards for Infill Housing in HPOZs and the Objective Design Standards for ADUs in HPOZs. The standards are intended to ensure that new housing is compatible with the objectives of individual HPOZ Preservation Plans while complying with State and local housing laws. Draft objective design

standards for HPOZs were released in Summer 2026 and are available on the [Los Angeles City Planning website](#).

3. Ministerial Subdivision Procedures

Missing Middle LA will establish new Ministerial Preliminary Parcel Map and Ministerial Tentative Tract Map procedures for housing projects that State law requires the City to approve ministerially, including SB 9 and Starter Home projects. Rather than adapting the City's existing discretionary subdivision procedures through administrative guidance, the new procedures will provide clear, standardized rules for ministerial subdivisions, making the process more transparent, predictable, and consistent for applicants, the public, and City staff.

The program will also establish a streamlined ministerial subdivision process for the separate sale of eligible ADUs as condominiums under AB 1033. The process will provide a simpler alternative to a traditional subdivision map while ensuring compliance with applicable objective requirements for utilities, access, easements, infrastructure, and other necessary standards. Draft procedures will be released separately for public review.

Frequently Asked Questions

What changes were made to the Second Draft Ordinances?

Following release of the Initial Draft Ordinances in June 2026, Los Angeles City Planning received public feedback through a webinar, office hours, technical working groups, and written comments. The Second Draft Ordinances were informed by that feedback and additional technical review. Please see below for a summary of the changes by ordinance:

ADU Ordinance Updates:

- Removes restrictions on combining City Ordinance & State Law ADUs, based on updated guidance from the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).
- Clarifies that the 800-square-foot State Law ADU guaranteed allowance is measured according to gross floor area, as defined in the Building Code.
- Allows the applicant to designate which dwelling serves as the primary dwelling (if multiple exist on a lot) to determine the number of allowable ADUs.
- Aligns ADU fire safety requirements with the City's proposed Fire Restriction Area provisions & incorporates applicable State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations.

- Limits ability to convert existing ground-floor commercial, retail, or office space into ADUs when the multifamily dwelling's ground-floor commercial or nonresidential use was provided as a public benefit or condition of approval.
- Clarifies that ADUs provided via the proposed ADU Bonus Program cannot be used to qualify a project for a state or local affordable housing incentive program.
- Clarifies that ADU ministerial approval requirements do not exempt other development or associated uses from otherwise applicable review procedures.
- Aligns tenant notice, purchase, and relocation protections with existing City and State condominium-conversion requirements.

Starter Home Ordinance Updates:

- Adds a section to provide more guidance on Remainder Parcels and specifies that these parcels may be nonconforming as part of a Starter Home Project, but would be subject to applicable zoning if redeveloped in the future.
- Allows for more flexibility in lot access for vehicles and pedestrians by deferring to citywide driveway standards in lieu of an 8-foot one-size-fits-all driveway standard, allowing for compact parking spaces, and clarifying how subterranean parking may be shared underneath multiple fee-simple lots.
- Strengthens the incentives to preserve Surveyed Historic Resources and Significant Trees by providing limited relief from building height or encroachment plane when needed to accommodate the additional floor area provided by the preservation incentive.
- Provides additional detail on how certain R1 and R1 Variation Zone development standards should be applied to Starter Home Projects.
- Amends the Bungalow Court definition to accommodate more traditional and varied configurations.
- Clarifies that Starter Home Projects may utilize a shared common-access sewer, subject to Bureau of Engineering approval, in alignment with the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance.
- Specifies that replacement or relocation of a protected tree or shrub may occur on any of the newly created parcels or a Remainder Parcel.

SB 9 Ordinance:

- Strengthens the incentives to preserve Surveyed Historic Resources and Significant Trees by providing limited relief from building height or encroachment plane when needed to accommodate the additional floor area provided by the preservation incentive.
- Allows SB 9 projects to utilize a common-access sewer, subject to Bureau of Engineering approval, in alignment with the Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance.
- Extends “early start” eligibility to SB 9 Urban Lot Splits, allowing projects to obtain building permits before the final map is recorded.

- Clarifies how SB 9 ministerial processing requirements should be applied to projects located in a Specific Plan, Supplemental Use District, or other overlay that would normally require discretionary review.

Why is the City of Los Angeles updating the ADU Ordinance?

The City is updating its 2019 ADU Ordinance to align with recent changes in California State Law and implement policy directives from City Council. State ADU law requires a fully compliant ADU Ordinance or it is considered “null and void.” As previously mentioned, this update will include implementation of AB 1033 (2023) to allow ADUs to be sold as condos. In addition, the City intends to expand restrictions on ADUs in designated Hillside Areas and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs) by removing the exemption to these restrictions currently applied to the Silver Lake - Echo Park - Elysian Valley and Northeast LA Community Plan Areas (Council File 16-1468-S2). State ADU law requires a detailed health-safety analysis and rigorous findings to justify any new restrictions, which are subject to review by HCD for compliance with State ADU law. Revisiting the City’s ADU Ordinance also presents an opportunity to evaluate existing regulations and processes that may create unnecessary barriers in areas where we want to encourage ADU development. The ordinance consolidates significant local allowances and new incentives into a new ADU Bonus Program.

How are ADUs currently regulated by the City?

California ADU law imposes mandatory standards that preempt local regulations concerning the number of automobile parking spaces, setbacks from the property line, passageways between structures, and impact fees among others. Cities have some discretion to create local ordinance ADU regulations, but they must also allow “state” ADUs outlined in [Government Code Section 66323](#). Local development standards cannot be applied to “state” ADUs and cities may not enforce other regulations that would have the effect of unreasonably restricting their development.

In Los Angeles, this dual-track system gives property owners more flexibility and advances citywide priorities. For instance, “local” ADUs in Los Angeles are prohibited on lots in both a VHFHSZ and a designated Hillside Area, unless they meet special safety requirements. Those restrictions do not apply to “state” ADUs. However, the City’s ADU Ordinance is less restrictive than state law in other areas. For new construction, a detached “local” ADU can have a floor area of up to 1,200 square feet and be built to the zoning height limit. In contrast, detached “state” ADUs of this type are limited to a floor area of 800 square feet and a maximum building heights of 16 - 20 feet.

More information concerning the City’s current ADU regulations and the allowable combinations of “local” and “state” ADUs can be found in the most recent [ADU Implementation Memo](#) (See Tables 1 - 2 on p.19 - 20).

Why is the City of Los Angeles Proposing an Ordinance to implement the HOME Act (SB 9) and the Starter Home Revitalization Act (SHRA)?

SB 9 & the SHRA changed California law to expand opportunities for new housing typologies and small-scale homeownership - commonly known as starter homes. These state laws are already in effect and apply citywide. The City of Los Angeles is proposing a local implementing ordinance to:

- Leverage and improve upon both laws—aligning them with local policy goals and addressing practical implementation challenges.
- Clarify how these state laws will be applied in Los Angeles and how they relate to other local code provisions.
- Expand access to more diverse and attainable housing options across the city.
- Create a local program that allows for the application of design and development standards to help modulate these unique housing types within existing neighborhoods, while also furthering housing policy objectives.

What sites are not eligible for the SHRA and the HOME Act?

Properties located in any of the following areas are ineligible for the SHRA and SB 9: prime or statewide important farmland; wetlands; conservation or habitat areas for protected species; hazardous waste sites, unless they have been cleared for residential use; regulatory floodways or specific flood hazard areas. SB 9 projects are allowed in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) and delineated earthquake fault zones if they comply with state mitigation and safety standards. However, SHRA projects are prohibited in VHFHSZs.

Additionally, a HOME Act or SHRA project is not eligible if it involves demolishing or altering units subject to affordable housing covenants, the City’s Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO), or that have been occupied by tenants within the past three to five years. Units withdrawn from the rental market through the Ellis Act within the last fifteen years are also ineligible. The City maintains eligibility checklists for both laws on its ZIMAS website.

How can the *Missing Middle LA* program further citywide policy and design goals by codifying these state laws?

Both SHRA and the HOME Act require cities to apply housing standards uniformly, making it difficult to create unique rules for specific project types. However, these

specific housing types (duplexes, small lot subdivisions, etc.) have distinct characteristics that often warrant tailored design and development standards. As such, the City is proposing the creation of local incentives to further citywide policy and design goals, including protection of significant trees and surveyed historic resources. In addition, the City proposes creating an optional citywide local program that provides development incentives in exchange for complying with design standards that will build upon and enhance the current Small Lot Development Standards and Map Standards. This framework also offers an opportunity to evaluate the addition of other provisions such as historic resource protection to ensure the program is meeting local objectives. By doing so, the City can better ensure these new housing options are well-integrated into neighborhoods while also supporting goals for affordability, livability, equity, and sustainability.

What does ministerial approval mean?

A ministerial approval process is non-discretionary and administrative in nature and must be based on objective standards only (see below). A ministerial project is not subject to a public hearing, CEQA, or appeals.

What are objective standards?

“Objective zoning standards,” “objective subdivision standards,” and “objective design review standards” do not involve personal or subjective judgment by a public official. They are uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion and are publicly available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official prior to submittal. Examples include quantifiable and fixed standards such as height or setbacks, or design standards such as specific dimensions or materials. In contrast, subjective standards require judgment and can be reasonably interpreted in multiple ways.

Why is ministerial approval with objective standards important for the housing types the *Missing Middle LA* program will advance?

While a larger institutional developer may have the resources to navigate a subjective discretionary review, the process certainty provided by an objective ministerial review is vital for smaller developers. This predictability makes it easier for them to obtain project financing and shortening the approval timeline can reduce holding costs that would otherwise be passed on to future tenants or buyers. Applying clear, check-the-box rules can also help democratize the development process since the small-scale projects Missing Middle LA facilitates have a much lower barrier to entry compared to larger developments. The ministerial process provides a standardized, rules-based approach to project review, with predetermined requirements that are publicly available and

consistently applied. This approach promotes consistency, transparency, and predictability by ensuring similar projects are evaluated against the same clearly defined standards and requirements.

What are the next steps and upcoming opportunities to provide public comment?

City Planning has prepared initial draft ordinances that have been released for public feedback. A public hearing on the proposed ordinances will be held on Thursday, October 1st, 2026, which will inform the future recommendations for the City Planning Commission (CPC). Members of the public may also submit written comments to planning.missingmiddlela@lacity.org through Friday, October 16, 2026 at 6:00 pm.

Who can I contact for additional information?

Additional information about the Missing Middle LA Program is available on the [LA City Planning Housing Policy webpage](#). Any media inquiries should be directed to Jamie Francisco at planning.media@lacity.org or (213) 562-8294.