

# FACT SHEET

## Ridgeline Protection Ordinance

Attachment "F.ii."

### Summary

In response to a City Council Motion (Council File No. 11-1441-S1), Los Angeles City Planning is proposing the Ridgeline Protection Ordinance, which aims to better preserve and protect the City's ridgelines- or the natural crests of the mountains that surround and bisect Los Angeles.

Below you will find some information about the background and key provisions of the proposed ordinance, followed by some frequently asked questions. For more information, including a link to the full text of the proposed ordinance, please visit [planning.lacity.org](http://planning.lacity.org).


### Background

Due to their ecological and aesthetic significance, ridgelines are an important and unique resource within the City of Los Angeles. Recognizing the value of these resources, the City Council issued a Motion (Council File No. 11-1441-S1) instructing City Planning to identify ways to better protect and preserve the City's ridgelines, which have become increasingly threatened by development activities. In response, Los Angeles City Planning has prepared the proposed Ridgeline Protection Ordinance.

The initial concepts for this proposed ordinance were shared at a community webinar on November 20, 2020. You can find the presentation from this webinar here. [link] <https://lacity.webdamdb.com/embedvid.php?embedAssetId=g5TpxgqOBkM6&apm=0>

### Key Provisions

The proposed ordinance creates a Ridgeline Protection (RP) Supplemental Use District (SUD), which contains two levels of protection that may be applied to properties in



ridgeline areas, referred to as Ridgeline Protection Level 1 (RP1) and Ridgeline Protection Level 2 (RP2). The Ridgeline Protection SUD provides enhanced regulations on:

- Grading permitted in ridgeline areas
- Structure location
- Height of structures relative to ridgeline elevations

This proposed ordinance does not propose the application of the Ridgeline Protection SUD to any property, but rather contains the regulations that may be applied to ridgeline areas either through Community Plan updates or targeted zone changes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do the two levels contained in the Ridgeline Protection Supplemental Use District (SUD) work to protect the City's Ridgelines?

The primary goal of Ridgeline Protection Level 1 (RP1) is to preserve the ridgelines and is intended to retain the natural profile, appearance, and ecological benefits of the City's ridgelines. To achieve this, RP1 contains strict setback, height, and grading restrictions in a buffer around the ridgeline.

The primary goal of Ridgeline Protection Level 2 (RP2) is to limit further degradation of ridgelines and is intended to ensure that new development is appropriately scaled and designed with a sensitivity to the surrounding ridgeline environment. To achieve this, RP2 contains limitations on building heights and grading activity that can occur, relative to the ridgeline, in the areas where it is applied.

## How will the Ridgeline Protection SUD be applied?

The Ridgeline Protection SUD is eligible to be applied in areas where ridgelines are mapped and identified. However, identifying the presence of ridgelines on a map does not extend any protection by itself. The Ridgeline Protection SUD is applied through a targeted zone change application process or through the Community Plan update process. Communities where Ridgelines are present will have an opportunity to provide feedback to guide the degree to which ridgeline protection is applied during the Community Plan update or targeted zone change .

## How do the Ridgeline Protection height regulations differ from existing height regulations in hillside areas?

The Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO) introduced a series of regulations aimed at limiting the height of structures in identified hillside areas. Concepts like envelope height, slope band analysis, and encroachment planes are all included in the BHO regulations. The proposed Ridgeline Protection Ordinance does not make any changes to these regulations. Rather, the height restrictions contained in RP1 and RP2 are in addition to all other height restrictions contained in the base zone of the property.

Furthermore, the Ridgeline Protection height restrictions are oriented around the height of buildings compared to the height of the segment of identified ridgeline, rather than the height of buildings themselves. RP1 requires all points of structures to be below a 50 vertical by 50 horizontal foot window from the ridgeline, while RP2 limits the height that structures can exceed the ridgeline by 18 feet. Similarly, the grading and setback requirements contained in the Ridgeline Protection SUD are to be additive to existing regulations, rather than a replacement.

Where there is conflict among the setback, height, or grading regulations contained in the Ridgeline Protection SUD and those contained in a Specific Plan, the zoning code or another SUD, the Ridgeline Protection Ordinance states that the more restrictive regulation will apply.

## How will RP1 vs RP2 determinations be made?

The proposed Ridgeline Protection Ordinance contains the regulations that form the Ridgeline Protection SUD, but it does not apply the SUD to any property. Any process to apply the Ridgeline Protection SUD will go through its own outreach and community engagement process.


RP1 and RP2 designations will primarily be made during the Community Plan update process or through a targeted zone change to lots that are eligible for ridgeline protection. Each neighborhood where Ridgelines exist will be examined, and the appropriate protection levels will be applied based on the existing conditions of the area, including existing zoning and development patterns, presence of ecological resources, as well as community input.

Preliminary outreach for an initial application area has started and will continue through a targeted zone change effort. This initial application area, if adopted, would be the first area to receive the Ridgeline Protection SUD and would result in a change to the zoning for those parcels that are affected.

## Are there any relief mechanisms available for properties that cannot comply with the Ridgeline Protection Ordinance regulations?

Yes, if a property owner would like to request relief from the setback, height, or grading requirements contained in the proposed ordinance, they may apply for a variance. In order for a variance to be granted, property owners must be able to demonstrate that site-specific conditions are present which make compliance with the ordinance regulations unfeasible.

## What other tools does the city have to address hillside and ridgeline issues?



There are currently several ordinances, Specific Plans, and Supplemental Use Districts in place to regulate development in response to the various issues facing hillside and ridgeline areas within the city. Examples include the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO), which created development regulations tailored to hillside areas with the intention of preventing out-of-scale development; the Hillside Construction Regulation (HCR) SUD, which regulates and imposes standards for large single-family home construction in hillside communities; Specific Plans, such as the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan and the San Gabriel/Verdugo Mountains Scenic Preservation Specific Plan, which, along with the Northeast Hillside Ordinance, contain localized regulations to better protect the environment and topography of the hillsides in which they are applied.


Additionally, work is underway on the Wildlife Pilot Study. The Wildlife Pilot Study is a project that aims to identify and protect the variety of ecological resources that exist in the City's hillside areas.

## What are the next steps in the Legislative Process?

There are multiple opportunities for the public to learn more and offer their comments on the proposed Ridgeline Protection ordinance. The draft ordinance has now been released, and comments are welcomed and encouraged. City Planning will evaluate the comments received and revise the ordinance, if needed, before 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 then be heard at the City Planning Commission (CPC) for recommendation. The CPC's recommendation will then be heard by the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee of the City Council. Finally, the full City Council will consider the ordinance for adoption.

## Who can I contact for additional information?

Please submit questions and comments for the proposed Ridgeline Protection Ordinance to Patrick Whalen at [patrick.whalen@lacity.org](mailto:patrick.whalen@lacity.org) or (213) 978-1370. To sign up for the



updates on this proposed Ordinance and other updates from the Department please visit, [planning.lacity.org/about/email-sign-up](https://planning.lacity.org/about/email-sign-up).