

USER'S GUIDE TO ALTERNATIVE HOUSING TYPOLOGIES in the City of Los Angeles

This guide is intended to serve as a starting reference for those interested in constructing housing with alternative typologies, including modular and micro units, container construction, and tiny homes.

It does not replace existing codes, and interested builders should contact the Los Angeles Department of City Planning (DCP) and the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) to review specific proposals or sites (see contact on reverse). Unless otherwise stated, projects using these typologies are subject to the same building, zoning, and energy codes as traditional forms of housing.

MODULAR CONSTRUCTION

Modular construction includes the use of building components (e.g. panelized walls) and/or complete units that are assembled in a factory and cannot be inspected on-site.



Star Apartments in Downtown LA

CURRENT REGULATIONS

- Modular units or buildings can only be certified through the [Factory-Built Housing Program](#) at the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- LADBS inspects installation and connections, and plan checks and inspects foundation and any other components not certified by HCD
- Modules must be permanently attached to a foundation
- Installation is treated the same as any other building in the Building Code

CONTAINER CONSTRUCTION

Container construction includes the use of intermodal shipping containers as structural elements.



Potter's Lane in Midway City, CA

CURRENT REGULATIONS

- LADBS permits on-site (non-factory-built) container construction for residential and non-residential structures up to two stories, as detailed in this [LADBS Information Bulletin](#)
- Containers to be converted to building modules must be standard dry cargo containers, used for the one-way transportation of dry goods only, and must meet certain safety standards as described
- Projects using factory-built container-based units or structures must be certified through HCD's [Factory-Built Housing Program](#), which operates under similar safety standards
- For factory-built projects, LADBS inspects installation and connections, and plan checks and inspects foundation and any other components not certified by HCD
- Unmodified containers may also be used for incidental storage on a non-residential lot, as detailed in this [LADBS Information Bulletin](#)

MICRO UNITS & TINY HOMES

Micro units and tiny homes are typically smaller than 400 SF and contain one habitable room as well as kitchen and bathroom facilities. Micro units often take the form of apartments in multifamily buildings, while tiny homes are detached and placed on a foundation or a trailer.

CURRENT REGULATIONS

- Tiny homes must contain one habitable room that is at least 70 SF and a bathroom. They must also provide facilities for living, sleeping, cooking, eating, and sanitation
- A tiny home could be built as an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on a site with a single-family home.
- Micro units in a multifamily building must contain one habitable room that is at least 120 SF, as well as a kitchen and bathroom
- If classified as an efficiency dwelling unit as outlined in the [California Building Code](#), a unit may contain only one room with a kitchen area, not less than 220 SF, as well as a bathroom and closet
- Unless otherwise stated, all habitable rooms in a dwelling unit must be at least 70 SF
- Parking requirements apply; usually at least one spot per unit for multifamily properties and two spots per single-family residence. Affordable housing projects or ADUs near transit may be exempt from these requirements
- The allowable number of units per acre is limited by the density in each zone
- Homes must be attached to foundations; units on wheels (i.e. trailers) are not permitted except under [special regulation for homeless housing](#) or where mobile home parks are permitted
- For more detailed information regarding tiny home construction, see HCD's [Tiny Home Information Bulletin](#)



Tiny home by California Tiny House

POTENTIAL CHANGES

- DCP may update density limitations and parking restrictions around transit in the Density Bonus Ordinance update, expected late 2017
- DCP may reduce density and parking restrictions for permanent supportive housing in a new permanent supportive housing ordinance, expected late 2017
- DCP may modify provisions for trailers for use as [temporary accommodations for the homeless](#)
- The City's [forthcoming ADU ordinance](#) may allow tiny homes on wheels as ADUs.

ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

Factory-built:

Partially or wholly manufactured in a factory and assembled on-site. Factory-built housing cannot be inspected on-site without damage or disassembly. Includes modular and panelized construction; must be certified through [HCD's Factory-Built Housing Program](#)

Manufactured housing:

A home transportable in one or more sections that meets the requirements set forth by the [US Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)

Mobile or Mobilehome:

A manufactured home built before June 15, 1976 and thus not built according to [current HUD standards](#)

Portable:

An informal term, referring to a residential structure that is not placed on a permanent foundation and is transportable

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For more detailed information or to discuss a specific project proposal, visit LADBS Concierge Services at the Metro or Van Nuys Development Service Centers, or call (213) 472-3231 and ask to speak with the engineer on duty.

Different requirements may apply for homeless shelters or congregate housing projects. Please contact DCP's Housing Services at (213) 202-5414 for more information.

