



Chapter 5: Urban Design

Chapter V

URBAN DESIGN

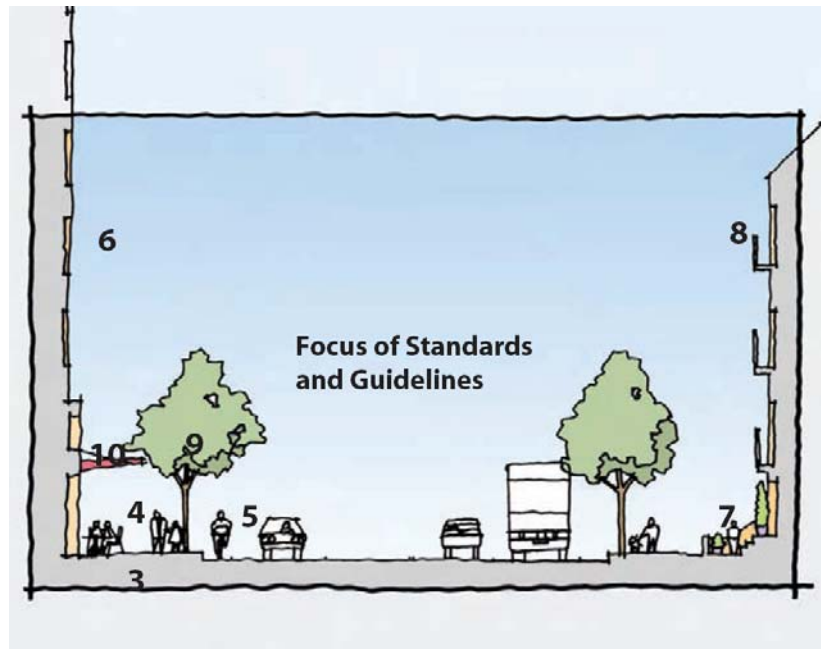
For the last half century the design of buildings in Downtown Los Angeles as in most American urban centers, has been mostly at odds with the process of forming the kinds of streets, squares and parks that are the armature of the pedestrian friendly city. Buildings have been more oriented to their own sites, rather than how they might form amenable urban space along with their neighborhoods.

Downtown Design Guide: Design for A Livable Downtown integrates urban design standards and guidelines with new street and sidewalk standards for Downtown. It supports citywide Urban Design Principles: Usable and Accessible Transit; Walkability and Well Being; Bridge the Past and the Future; Accentuate Visual Interest; Nurture Neighborhood Character; Develop Street Furnishings; Emphasize Implementation and Maintenance; Stimulate Sustainability and Innovation; Improve Equity and Opportunity; Generate Public Open Space and Support Navigation, Connection and Flow.

Tailored for Downtown, *Downtown Design Guide: Design for A Livable Downtown* will focus on Housing and Transportation Choice, Shops and Services with Walking Distance, Safe, Shared Streets, Gathering Places and Active Recreation Areas. It fulfills the following objectives:

- Creates Pedestrian Orientation for street types, unique to Downtown.
- Implements streetscape and landscape criteria that reinforce the pedestrian quality of Downtown's streets and public open spaces that takes advantage of the great local climate; and that promotes the use and enjoyment of the outdoors.
- Defines criteria for building massing, street wall, ground floor treatment, parking and access, on-site open space, architectural detail and signage.
- Implements parking design criteria, whether applied to garages, open air lots or integrally within other buildings, that create places that provide safety, comfort and convenience for the pedestrian.
- Encourages, through design, the Parking District concept (spaces within individual projects are accessible and shared within a District during off-peak user hours and managed within these fluctuating parking demand periods) to maximize parking and minimize the amount of land devoted to parking.
- Respects existing and planned development guidelines for the Historic Core.
- Promotes green streets and green alleys.

Diagram below shows the zone of development on which the standards and guidelines focus. Numbers correspond to the sections of *Design for a Livable Downtown* in which each topic is addressed:



3. Sidewalks and Setbacks
4. Ground Floor Treatment
5. Parking and Access
6. Massing and Street Wall
7. On-Site Open Space
8. Architectural Detail
9. Streetscape Improvements
10. Signage

BUNKER HILL

- Maintain the highest standards of design and quality of material.
- Maintain existing open, lushly landscaped development and encourage new development to continue the landscape treatment.
- Increase pedestrian friendly streetscapes.
- Improve the pedestrian orientation of the district by requiring 15-foot minimum width sidewalks throughout, active ground floor uses, and pedestrian-scaled landscaping and improvements on Olive and Hill streets.

LITTLE TOKYO

- Maintain the integrity of Little Tokyo a Japanese-American cultural and residential-commercial community.

- Maintain existing and improve overall pedestrian linkage, including Azusa Street as a Pedestrian Walk, within Little Tokyo, as well as with neighboring districts (e.g., Arts District, industrial areas, Civic Center).
- Complete the development of the Central Art Park.
- Increase pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, using Japanese-themed plant materials, street furniture and other streetscape elements, wherever practicable.
- Implement the adopted Little Tokyo Planning and Design Guidelines (adopted by the CRA/LA Board in April 2006), and any subsequent amendments.
- Complete the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay Zone and integrate the Planning and Design Guidelines.

SOUTH PARK

- Provide a major open space focus for this residential neighborhood and established network of well-landscape streets, mini-parks and mid-block paseos in order to create a garden city environment.
- Complete the Hope Street Promenade as a well-landscaped, mixed-use street detailed for the pedestrian, and linking South Park neighborhoods to the Financial Core.

CONVENTION CENTER/ARENA

- Fully develop all streets and parks to accommodate outdoor activities and to provide pedestrian linkages between this district and other Downtown neighborhoods and districts.
- Implement the Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment District (LASED) Streetscape Plan.

HISTORIC CORE/CENTER CITY

- Establish urban design guidelines and set up preservation priorities that strike a balance between historic preservation and new development.
- Use as a resource the Historic Downtown Los Angeles Design Guidelines to guide rehabilitation and public improvements that maintain and complement the area's historic character.
- Develop Broadway and Spring Streets as the two-signature streets of this district. Develop Main Street and its adjacent east-west streets with residential uses and neighborhood amenities. Develop Hill Street with mixed uses that encourage easy access to and from Bunker Hill.

- Support and implement the Bringing Back Broadway Initiative to revitalize Broadway as a vibrant entertainment and cultural destination for businesses, pedestrians, transit users, shoppers, visitors, residents:
- Develop and adopt a Community Design Overlay Zone.
- Complete a Streetscape Plan to reinforce connections and linkages for businesses/pedestrians/transit users.
- Support implementation of a Streetcar system to serve and connect Broadway, the Historic Core with Downtown destinations.
- Provide incentives for visual vibrancy, commercial re-use/re-activation opportunities, shared/municipal parking opportunities.
- Link east-west mid-block paseo and galleries into a network that provides easy pedestrian access through the area, activated by retail and institutional uses. Use alleys for service and parking access and make them secure at all times.

SOUTH MARKETS

- Develop a set of architecturally distinctive indoor and outdoor markets for the flower, produce and garment industries.
- Establish development standards that promote pedestrian-oriented facilities and small-scale buildings that reinforce the character of the district.
- Develop innovative alley standards to promote retail paseos.
- Create design guidelines for the area including storefront and signage design. Develop new mini-parks and undertake streetscape improvements including trees, signage and street furniture.
- Create a street-oriented retail component of the Flower Market including flower shops, restaurants and shops. Create a street identity for the Flower Market on both Seventh and Eight Streets. Establish streetscaping and façade improvement programs making more areas inviting for retail customers.

OPEN SPACE

Civic Open Space

Because so little dedicated public open space exists in Downtown, creating a framework of civic open spaces and streets that provide necessary and suitable settings for the public life of the community is of the highest priority. Pershing Square is the first and oldest civic square of Downtown's "new town" expansion designated as a public square in 1868. Three more spaces of similar scale should be developed and distributed equally and in a memorable pattern throughout Downtown, to give clarity to the urban form that is the heart of the Los Angeles metropolis.

To be truly civic in scale, these spaces should be the size of a full city block and should be bounded on all sides by public streets. They should be accessible, although hours of use may be controlled. They should be designed for the flexible use of space, accommodating sizeable numbers of people, providing a forum for organized public events as well as for every day casual use. These civic open spaces represent Downtown and the City; therefore, they should boast fine, durable materials, public art, and symbolic information conveying a sense of place. Simply put, these spaces help people know where they are in Downtown and to feel comfortable being there.

Civic Center Park Proposal



Park 101 Freeway Park Concept



Opportunities to adaptively re-use publicly-owned land downtown to create significant urban open space should be pursued. The Grand Avenue Civic Park, at 16 acres, affords an opportunity to implement civic open space among the Court, County and City Buildings. The Park 101 Freeway Park, at more than 100 acres, could be placed on a “lid” built over the 101 Freeway, affording new connections to neighborhoods in and near Downtown, Chinatown, Little Tokyo and the urban core.

To unify Downtown and also give focus to its various neighborhood and districts, South Park Square and Market Square should each be designed and programmed with individual character and functions that would be capable of generating activity of both local and regional interest, such as markets, cultural affairs, entertainment and recreational events. Although a full city block park, “San Julian Commons” is also designated as civic open space.

Neighborhood Parks

In addition to the civic-scale open spaces, a network of small and well-distributed public and semi-public open space are recommended to serve the needs of individual districts, neighborhoods, developments and institutions. These should be distributed at about 5-minute walking distances (1/4 mile) and should vary in size and character according to land availability and use. Local users should be involved in their design and planning. These may accommodate more active uses such as playgrounds, community gardens, and local group displays and performances. As city life unfolds, and districts and their occupants change, it is quite common and proper for parks to be “recreated” at intervals to accommodate new needs.

STREET HIERARCHY/STANDARDS

Objectives

To develop a street hierarchy to serve transit, traffic, pedestrian, open space and truck access needs in a coordinated manner.

Policies

- Provide the essential connections and interchanges necessary for a comprehensive transportation system.
- Provide a street hierarchy that would prioritize streets as follows: (1) Retail, Residential and Other Streets as identified in *Downtown Design Guide: Design for a Livable Downtown*; (2) Transit Priority Streets (3) Truck Route Street; (4) Local Truck Street.
- Transit Priority Streets: Figueroa Street, Flower Street, Broadway, Olympic Boulevard and Pico Boulevard.
- Modify Street Standards to permit wider sidewalks, parkways and stormwater infiltration, more on-street parking, bike lanes and curb extensions and medians where feasible.

- Seek funding for implementation of two north-south (Figueroa and Flower Streets) and 3 east-west (2nd and 7th Streets and Venice Boulevard) bicycle lanes accommodated in revised improvement standards for these streets.
- Seek funding to enable implementation of wider sidewalks for whole block faces.

Programs

- The central core of Downtown would receive transit priority while such streets as Figueroa and Flower Streets; Olympic and Pico Boulevards would be retained as key automobile streets serving Downtown.
- Los Angeles, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th make freeway ramp connections for automobiles, but also serve as links between neighborhoods.
- In Central City east and the South Market area, a number of streets have been designated as truck routes to facilitate the movement of goods into and out of the industrial areas.

PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES

Objectives

- To provide an extensive, well-formed and well-maintained pedestrian network.
- To link transit and pedestrian districts of historic Downtown Los Angeles.

Policies

- Create an extensive pedestrian network that helps merge the transportation and open space elements of the City.
- Implementation of Angels Walk as it relates to the Central City Community Plan.

THE AVENIDAS

The project would create public open space, which encourage pedestrian activity, interaction and community identity emphasizing the continuity of Downtown as one place rather than a series of isolated and unconnected islands of activity.

- Develop pedestrian oriented streets that connect the Civic Mall, squares and open spaces. This project could create bus lanes, reduce auto lanes, widen sidewalks along one side of each street and add streetscape, trees, furniture and other pedestrian amenities.

ANGELS WALK

- Little Tokyo: Make 2nd Street from Alameda to the west side of Little Tokyo pedestrian-oriented and a link to other portions of the Angels Walk network.

Provide for sidewalk widening, enhancement of streetscape and establishment of public open spaces.

- Bunker Hill and Music Center/Civic Center District: Improve the pedestrian linkages at each of the five Downtown Metrorail portals.

A special focus on the portals at Fourth and Hill Streets. Angel Flight Grand Central Square, Historic Broadway and Spring Street are on the verge of merging into a continuous pedestrian sequence.

Continuous streetscape improvements for pedestrians along the Hill Street corridor itself.

Integration of the proposed regional consolidation of the State of California offices along Fourth Street.

Connections to more distant pedestrian destinations such as Disney Hall, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Chinatown, Union Station and Little Tokyo.

- El Pueblo (Union Station Connection): Provide a pedestrian bridge that would span the 101 Freeway connecting El Pueblo with Union Station (a landmark gateway) and the Children's Museum and the Historic Core/Center City.
- Street Types: To further enhance the Downtown pedestrian experience, a hierarchy of improved streets should be created.

Boulevards extending throughout Downtown and leading along important corridors and to important destinations (Broadway, Grand, 1st, 7th, Alameda and Figueroa).

"Paseo" passages that cut through midblocks of the very large-scale City grid to overlay a plaid of more intimately scaled walkways.

Non-through streets of all sizes which discourage vehicular use and there provide special opportunities for local, pedestrian-friendly treatment.

The design criteria should be developed for each of these types of corridors and should focus on the creation of a network of attractive, useable streets designed to emphasize the visual and functional needs to pedestrians as the heart of a public realm in which residents, workers, shoppers and tourists feel comfortable.

Particular emphasis should be placed on a landscape palette that distinguishes street-types from each other, and on appropriate minimum width of sidewalks so that they readily accommodate pedestrian activities.

- Grand Avenue Cultural Corridor

Implement street improvement between the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels at the Hollywood Freeway and the Central Library at Fifth Street that promotes pedestrian use and provides a unique and striking environment that links together the important civic, cultural, and institutional uses and facilities concentrated there.