

# COMMERCIAL CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Pedestrian-Oriented/Commercial & Mixed-Use Projects



Los Angeles  
Department  
of City Planning

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The City of Los Angeles' General Plan Framework Element and each of the City's 35 Community Plans promote architectural and design excellence in buildings, landscape, open space, and public space. They also stipulate that preservation of the City's character and scale, including its traditional urban design form, shall be emphasized in consideration of future development. To this end, the Citywide Design Guidelines have been created to carry out the common design objectives that maintain neighborhood form and character while promoting design excellence and creative infill development solutions.

The Citywide Design Guidelines serve to implement the 10 Urban Design Principles, a part of the Framework Element. These principles are a statement of the City's vision for the future of Los Angeles, providing guidance for new development and encouraging projects to complement existing urban form in order to enhance the built environment in Los Angeles. While called "urban", the Urban Design Principles reflect citywide values to be expressed in the built environment of the City, establishing a design program for the City. They are intended to embrace the variety of urban forms that exist within Los Angeles, from the most urban, concentrated centers to our suburban neighborhoods.



### **THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN**

- 1 Develop inviting and accessible transit areas.
- 2 Reinforce walkability, bikeability and well-being.
- 3 Nurture neighborhood character.
- 4 Bridge the past and the future.
- 5 Produce great green streets.
- 6 Generate public open space.
- 7 Stimulate sustainability and innovation in our city.
- 8 Improve equity and opportunity.
- 9 Emphasize early integration, simple processes and maintainable solutions.
- 10 Ensure connections.

The Citywide Design Guidelines supplement the Citywide Urban Design Principles. By offering more direction for proceeding with the design of a project, the Design Guidelines illustrate options, solutions, and techniques to achieve the goal of excellence in new design. It is important to remember, though, that they are performance goals, not zoning regulations or development standards and therefore do not supersede regulations in the municipal code.

#### **The purpose of this document is to:**

- Communicate to the development community, in advance of application being filed, the design expectations in Residential, Commercial, and Industrial projects;
- Facilitate the fair and consistent application of design objectives;
- Protect investment throughout the city by encouraging consistently high-quality development;
- Encourage projects appropriate to the context of the City's climate and urban environment;
- Facilitate safe, functional, and attractive development; and
- Foster a sense of community and encourage pride of ownership.

## HOW ARE THE GUIDELINES APPLIED

The Guidelines are intended for the Planning Department, as well as other City agencies and department staff, developers, architects, engineers, and community members to use in evaluating project applications along with relevant policies from the General Plan Framework and Community Plans. To achieve the stated purpose, the Guidelines will apply to all new developments and substantial building alterations that require approval by decision-making bodies and planning staff. However, all "by-right" (see *definition in glossary*) development projects are also encouraged to incorporate the Design Guidelines into their project design.

Each of the Citywide Design Guidelines should be considered in a proposed project, although not all will be appropriate in every case, as each project will require a unique approach. The Citywide Design Guidelines provide guidance or direction for applying policies contained within the General Plan Framework and the Community Plans. Incorporating these guidelines into a project's design will encourage more compatible architecture, attractive multi-family residential districts, pedestrian activity, context-sensitive design, and contribute to placemaking.

## HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES

Property owners, developers, designers, and contractors proposing new development in Los Angeles should first review the zoning of the property being developed. They should then proceed to the Citywide Design Guidelines appropriate to the project, dependent on whether it is residential, commercial, or industrial.

The provisions set forth in this document identify the desired level of design quality for all development. However, flexibility is necessary and encouraged to achieve excellent design. Therefore, the use of the words "shall" and "must" have been purposely avoided within the specific guidelines. Each application for development, however, should demonstrate to what extent it incorporates these guidelines.

Applications that do not meet specific guidelines applicable to that project should provide rationale for the design and explain how the project will meet the intent of the General Plan, the Municipal Code, and these Guideline objectives. Whether the design is justified will be determined through required "Findings" in the appropriate section of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENERAL PLAN, ZONING CODE, CITYWIDE GUIDELINES, AND COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The approval process for new development is guided by the General Plan, Chapter I of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, and the Citywide Design Guidelines.

**City of Los Angeles General Plan:** Comprised of 35 Community plans, the General Plan is the policy document that sets the development vision of the community. It provides policy direction for land use, vehicular and bicycle circulation, open space and recreation, and infrastructure.


**Los Angeles Municipal Code:** Adopted ordinances that implement the General Plan by establishing land use and development requirements. The Municipal Code includes provisions for the establishment of specific plans and supplemental use districts.

**Citywide Design Guidelines:** Establishes best practices for designing high-quality development that meets the objectives of the General Plan. Certain items apply to site planning and others to building design and aesthetics.

Many neighborhoods in Los Angeles have adopted guidelines as part of a Community Plan Urban Design chapter, or special zoning designations such as specific plans, community design overlay districts, redevelopment plans, designated historic properties and historic districts. This document applies to all areas, but is particularly applicable to those areas within the City that do not currently have adopted design guidelines. In cases where the Citywide Design Guidelines conflict with a provision in a Community Plan Urban Design chapter or a specific plan, the community-specific requirements shall prevail.

## ORGANIZATION

The guidelines are divided into three sections: Residential, Commercial, and Industrial. Within each section are a number of design principles and measures that address the different elements of site and building design and environmental sensitivity based on land use. Each section of the Citywide Design Guidelines is organized by overarching objectives (e.g., Maintaining Neighborhood Context and Linkages). Each topic includes an objective statement followed by a list of specific implementation strategies. A glossary of key terms is included on page 47 of this document. \* Terms that are defined in the glossary and appear throughout the text are highlighted on each page for the user's convenience.

Guidelines that promote low-impact development and sustainable practices are designated by a leaf (  ) symbol.



## commercial

### pedestrian-oriented | commercial and mixed-use projects

Commercial land serves the shopping and service needs of residents in Los Angeles and has the potential to contribute to a strong sense of neighborhood identity. Commercial parcels can be organized and concentrated differently throughout the City and resulting forms significantly influence the nature of how residents access goods and services. In some communities, commercial land is organized in a linear pattern along major arterial corridors; sometimes commercial parcels are concentrated in nodes at intersections or interspersed with predominantly residential uses; and in Regional Centers such as Downtown, Century City, and Warner Center, commercial uses are concentrated vertically.

Thoughtful design components reinforce the positive identity of a community's commercial core and contribute to neighborhood character. The following design guidelines are intended to address some of the most common, overarching challenges in planning commercial developments within our diverse communities. The prime areas of opportunity for attaining high quality design in commercial projects include: enhancing the quality of the pedestrian experience along commercial corridors; nurturing an overall active street presence; protecting and conserving the neighborhood architectural character; establishing height and massing transitions between residential and commercial uses; maintaining visual and spatial relationships with adjacent buildings; and optimizing opportunities for high quality infill development that strengthens the visual and functional quality of the commercial environment within the context of our neighborhoods. More specific design regulations relating to individual communities can be found in each of the 35 Community Plans.



## OBJECTIVE 1:

### Consider Neighborhood Context and Linkages In Building and Site Design

#### Site Planning

- 1 Create a strong street wall by locating **building frontages** at the required **setback** or, where no setback requirement exists, at the front property line. Where additional setback is necessary or a prevailing setback exists, activate the area with a courtyard or "outdoor room" adjacent to the street by incorporating **pedestrian amenities** such as plazas with seating or water features, for example.
- 2 Provide direct paths of travel for pedestrian destinations within large developments. Especially near transit lines, create primary entrances for pedestrians that are safe, easily accessible, and a short distance from transit stops.

#### RECOMMENDED



New ground floor storefront is built to the property line, defining the street edge



Transit-oriented development with direct pedestrian path from subway entrance to street and shops

### Site Planning (cont.)

- 3 Maintain existing alleys for access. Avoid vacating alleys or streets to address project-specific design challenges.
- 4 In dense neighborhoods, incorporate passageways or **paseos** into mid-block developments, particularly on through blocks, that facilitate pedestrian and bicycle access to commercial amenities from adjacent residential areas. Maintain easy access to commercial areas from adjacent residential neighborhoods to avoid unnecessary or circuitous travel.

#### RECOMMENDED



✓ Alleyway with active businesses and pedestrian access

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Vacated street severs pedestrian access to street network

**Objective 1:** Consider Neighborhood Context and Linkages in Building and Site Design

- 5 Activate mid-block passageways, **pedestrian walkways**, or **paseos** using water features, pedestrian-level lighting, murals or artwork, benches, landscaping, or special paving so that they are safe and visually interesting spaces.
- 6 Place buildings around a central common open space to promote safety and the use of shared outdoor areas. In mid- and high-rise buildings, podiums between buildings and rooftop areas can be used as common areas.
- 7 Place public use areas such as restaurant seating, reception and waiting areas, lobbies, and retail, along street-facing walls where they are visible to passersby.

**RECOMMENDED**



Outdoor dining located along street frontage and visible to passersby



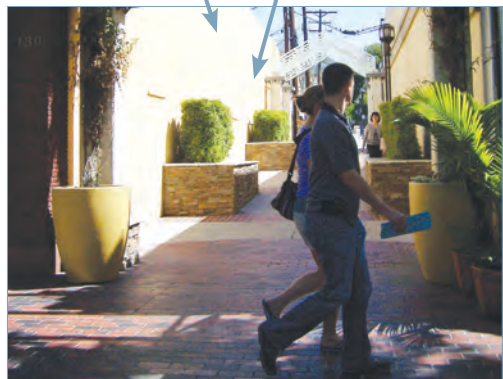
Central common space or "outdoor room" to gather in a shared outdoor area



Landscaping promotes a pleasant pedestrian experience



Specially paved mid-block passageway for easy access



Site Planning (cont.)

- 8 Place drive-thru elements away from primary site corners and adjacent primary streets.
- 9 At gas stations, car washes, and drive-thru establishments, ensure that separate structures on the site have consistent architectural detail and design elements to provide a cohesive project site.

RECOMMENDED



✓ Drive-thru is located to the side of the building, maintaining a strong street wall at the site corner

NOT RECOMMENDED



Drive-thru located at a corner creates a missed opportunity to draw pedestrians



**Objective 1:** Consider Neighborhood Context and Linkages in Building and Site Design

- 10 Install bicycle racks and lockers, especially in multi-tenant commercial or mixed-use buildings located on Major or Secondary highways where bike routes are existing or planned. Ensure bicycle racks are placed in a safe, convenient, and well-lit location to encourage alternative modes of transport for employees and consumers with small purchases.

**RECOMMENDED**



Bicycle racks located near public transit and commercial businesses

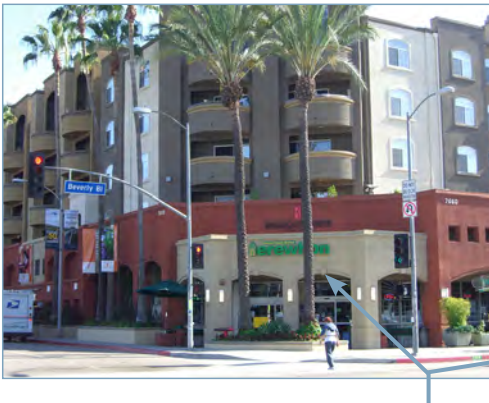




## Building Orientation

- 11 Orient the long side of large-format retail establishments parallel to the public street to physically define the street edge. Large format retail with multiple tenants should provide distinct entrances and storefronts to improve site design flexibility for future retail uses at the same location.

### RECOMMENDED



✓ Commercial building wraps around the street corner and engages pedestrians

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Large retail development turns its back on public street

## Objective 1: Consider Neighborhood Context and Linkages in Building and Site Design

### Entrances

- 1 Provide a logical sequence of entry and arrival as part of the site's design. Special entry treatments such as stamped or colored concrete and special planting and signage can be used to enhance entries and guide pedestrians.
- 2 Entries should be designed according to simple and harmonious proportions in relationship to the overall size and scale of the building. Ensure that pedestrian entries provide shelter year-round.
- 3 Ensure that the main entrance and entry approach can accommodate persons of all mobility levels.

#### RECOMMENDED



#### NOT RECOMMENDED



## Entrances (cont.)

- Promote pedestrian activity by placing entrances at **grade** level and unobstructed from view from the public right-of-way. Avoid **sunken entryways** below street level. Where stairs are located near the main entrance, highly visible and attractive stairs should be placed in a common area such as an atrium or lobby and integrated with the predominant architectural design elements of the main building.
- Ground floor** retail establishments in **mixed-use projects** should maintain at least one street-facing entrance with doors unlocked during regular business hours to maintain an active street presence.

### RECOMMENDED



### NOT RECOMMENDED





## Objective 1: Consider Neighborhood Context and Linkages in Building and Site Design

- 6 Ensure that commercial **ground floor** uses provide clear and unobstructed windows, free of reflective coatings and exterior mounted gates and security grills. Ensure that landscaping does not create a barrier between pedestrians and the **building frontage**, nor views into buildings at the ground floor.
- 7 Install electronic security to avoid the need for unsightly security grills and bars. If such security measures are necessary, ensure that security grills and bars recess completely into pockets at the side or top of storefronts so as to conceal the grills when they are retracted.

### RECOMMENDED



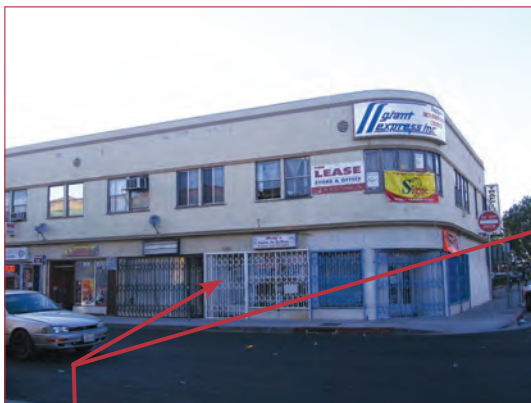
✓ Bicycle racks conveniently located near building entrance



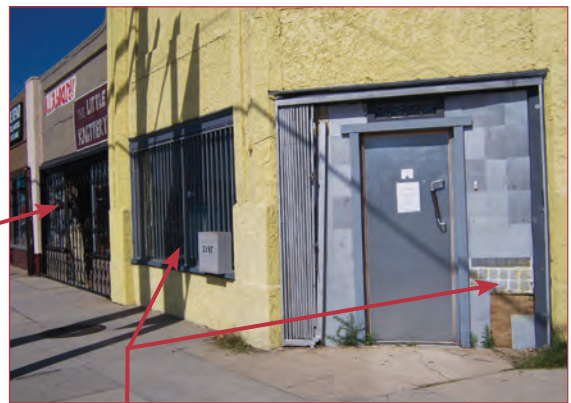
✓ Using windows as a character defining feature

✓ Street-facing entrance on ground floor

### NOT RECOMMENDED



! Security grills are hostile towards passersby and obscure views



! Missed opportunity to create an active street-facing entrance

## Relationship to Adjacent Buildings

- 1 Ensure that new buildings are compatible in scale, massing, style, and/or architectural materials with existing structures in the surrounding neighborhood. In older neighborhoods, new developments should likewise respect the character of existing buildings with regards to height, scale, style, and architectural materials.
- 2 Soften transitions between commercial districts and immediately surrounding residential neighborhoods with respect to building height, massing, and negative impacts of light and noise. Plant trees, shrubs, or vines to grow between property lines.
- 3 Where commercial or multi-family projects are adjacent to single-family zones, provide a sensitive transition by maintaining a height compatible with adjacent residential buildings. Mitigate negative shade/shadow and privacy impacts by stepping back upper floors and avoiding direct views into neighboring single-family yards.

### RECOMMENDED



- ✓ Tall hedge between single-family residential and commercial use serves as a privacy screen



- ✓ Alleyway provides additional transitional element between different land uses

### NOT RECOMMENDED



- ! High-rise office building adjacent to multi-family housing insensitive to height transition and creates negative shade/shadow impacts



- ! Poor height transition between commercial and single-family residential properties



**Objective 1:** Consider Neighborhood Context and Linkages in Building and Site Design

- 4 In pedestrian-oriented commercial areas with predominantly smaller storefronts (especially when a project is built over two or more lots), apply vertical breaks and pedestrian-scaled storefront **bays** to prevent monolithic "box-like" buildings and maintain a storefront rhythm consistent with surrounding buildings.
- 5 Break up the floor space in large retail developments to add variety, interest, and built-in flexibility to accommodate future uses of differing scales.

**RECOMMENDED**



Ground floor commercial businesses are differentiated using vertical breaks and changes in building color and materials while maintaining an overall design theme

**NOT RECOMMENDED**



Ground floor bays should relate to pedestrians with respect to height, width, and overall proportions

## OBJECTIVE 2:

Employ High Quality Architecture to Define the Character of Commercial Districts

### Pedestrian Scale

- 1 Maintain a human scale rather than a monolithic or monumental scale. High-rise buildings in particular should take care to address pedestrian scale at the **ground floor**.
- 2 At entrances and windows, include overhead architectural features such as awnings, canopies, **trellises**, or **cornice treatments** that provide shade and reduce daytime heat gain, especially on south-facing facades.
- 3 Differentiate the ground floor from upper floors. Changes in massing and architectural relief add visual interest and help to diminish the perceived height of buildings.

#### RECOMMENDED



Ground floor retail provides pedestrian scale



Differentiate ground floors from upper floors through architectural features

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Ground floor height dwarfs pedestrian scale



Poorly defined hierarchy of building uses

## Building Façade and Form

- 1 Vary and articulate the building façade to add scale and avoid large monotonous walls.
- 2 Architectural elements such as entries, **porticoes**, **cornices**, and awnings should be compatible in scale with the building massing and should not be exaggerated or made to appear as a caricature of an historic architectural style.
- 3 Layer building architectural features to emphasize certain features of the building such as entries, corners, and the organization of retail or office spaces.
- 4 Incorporate and alternate different textures, colors, materials, and distinctive architectural treatments that add visual interest while avoiding dull and repetitive façades.

### RECOMMENDED

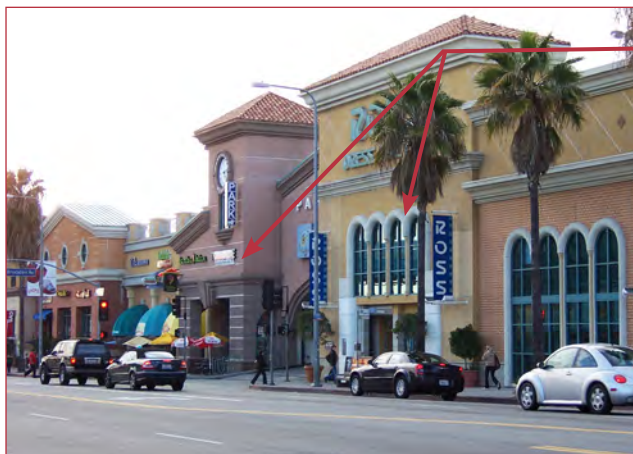


✓ Strong corner treatment establishes visual prominence



✓ Building facade can be articulated by breaking up a single wall into multiple wall planes

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Exaggerated features do not connote a unified architectural style

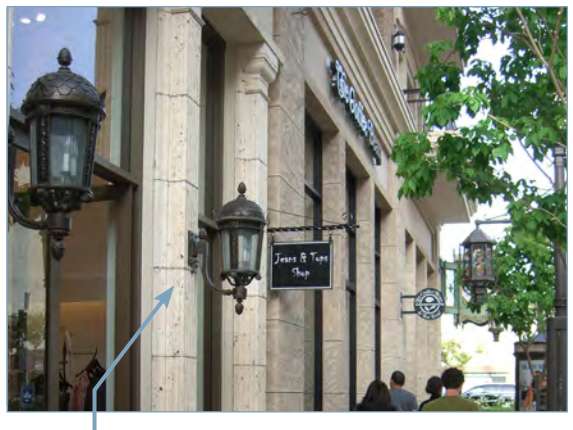
### Building Façade & Form (cont.)

- 5 Incorporate windows and doors with well designed trims and details as character-defining features to reflect an architectural style or theme consistent with other façade elements.
- 6 Treat all façades of the building with an equal level of detail, articulation, and architectural rigor.
- 7 Integrate varied roof lines through the use of sloping roofs, modulated building heights, **stepbacks**, or innovative architectural solutions.
- 8 Reinforce existing facade rhythm along the street where it exists by using architectural elements such as trim, material changes, paved walkways, and other design treatments consistent with surrounding buildings.

#### RECOMMENDED



- ✓ Architectural elements used to define characteristic features of the building and existing streetscape



- ✓ Strong facade rhythm reinforced by defining architectural features of the building

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Façade rhythm along street not reinforced



**Objective 2:** Employ High-Quality Architecture to Define the Character of Commercial Districts

- 9 In **mixed-use projects**, orient windows in street-facing units toward public streets, rather than inward, to contribute to neighborhood safety and provide design interest.
- 10 In mixed-use buildings, ensure that balconies are sized and located to maximize their intended use for open space. Avoid "tacked on" balconies with limited purpose or function.

**RECOMMENDED**



Functional balconies  
with street-oriented  
doors and windows



## Building Materials

- 1 Approach character-defining details in a manner that is true to a style of architecture or common theme.
- 2 Apply trim, metal- and woodwork, lighting, and other details in a harmonious manner, consistent with the proportions and scale of the building(s).
- 3 Select building materials, such as architectural details and finishes that convey a sense of permanence. Quality materials should be used to withstand the test of time regardless of architectural style.
- 4 Apply changes in material purposefully and in a manner corresponding to variations in building mass.

### RECOMMENDED



Cohesive style and appropriate building materials convey a sense of permanence



Application of details is to scale and remains true to the architectural style of the building

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Lack of architectural style and sense of permanence in building design and materials

## Objective 2: Employ High-Quality Architecture to Define the Character of Commercial Districts

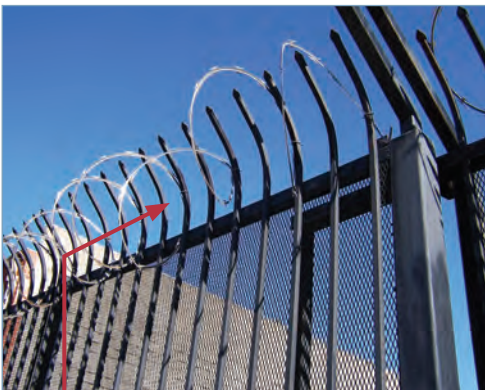
- 5 Use white or reflective paint on rooftops and light paving materials to reflect heat away from buildings and reduce the need for mechanical cooling.
- 6 Use exterior surface materials that will reduce the incidence and appearance of graffiti.
- 7 Fences should incorporate changes in materials, texture, and/or landscaping to avoid solid, uninterrupted walls. Avoid materials such as chain link, wrought iron spears, and cyclone.

### RECOMMENDED



Climbing vegetation used to create texture and visual interest while discouraging vandalism

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Materials such as wrought iron spears and cyclone should be avoided



Avoid large blank walls which are more susceptible to graffiti

### Building Materials *(cont.)*

- Utilize landscaping to add texture and visual interest at the street level. Where limited space is available between the building and the public right-of-way, incorporate climbing vegetation as a screening method.

#### RECOMMENDED



Vegetation and pop out columns provide visual interest on an otherwise solid wall

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Bulky landscaping can create an unnecessary barrier between pedestrians and the building



## Objective 2: Employ High-Quality Architecture to Define the Character of Commercial Districts

### Storefront Character

- 1 In multi-tenant buildings, ensure that storefronts convey an individual expression of each tenant's identity while adhering to a common architectural theme and rhythm.
- 2 Design storefronts with a focus on window design to create a visual connection between the interior and exterior.
- 3 Incorporate traditional storefront elements in new and contemporary commercial buildings by including a solid base for storefront windows. Use high quality durable materials such as smooth stucco or concrete, ceramic tile, or stone for the window base.
- 4 Provide shelter from the sun and rain for pedestrians along the public right-of-way where the buildings meet the street. Extend overhead cover across driveways or provide architecturally integrated awnings, arcades, and canopies.

#### RECOMMENDED



#### NOT RECOMMENDED



### Storefront Character *(cont.)*

- 5 Align awnings with others on the block, particularly the bottom edge of the awning. Coordinate the awning color with the color scheme of the entire building front.
- 6 Ensure that store entrances are recessed, not flush, with the edge of the building façade to articulate the storefront and provide shelter for persons entering and exiting.

#### RECOMMENDED

✓  
Awning provides shelter for patrons and a sense of rhythm along the street

✓  
Traditional storefront elements such as large display windows and landscaping create an inviting space for pedestrians



✓  
Use of solid base at storefronts frames the view



✓  
Pedestrian shelter contributes to articulated storefront character

#### NOT RECOMMENDED

! No shelter for persons accessing the building

! Store entrance flush with the wall

! Lack of traditional storefront elements makes the facade appear two-dimensional



! Metal security gate is visible behind the glass





## Special Design Considerations for Historic Properties

Ensure that any additions, alterations, or improvements to buildings designated as Historic Resources or otherwise identified as eligible Historic Resources as part of Survey LA, comply with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings can be found online at: [http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose\\_treat.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose_treat.htm)

### **Repair deteriorated materials or features in place, if feasible.**

Preserve, repair, and replace, as appropriate, building elements and features that are important in defining historic character. Retain the original building continuity, rhythm, and form created by these features. Consult historic documentation and photographs of the building before commencing work.

- Original building materials and details should not be covered with stucco, vinyl siding, stone, veneers, or other materials.
- Materials, which were originally unpainted, such as masonry, should remain unpainted.
- Avoid hiding character defining features behind displays, signage, and/or building alterations and additions. Remove non-historic additions to expose and restore the original design elements.
- The materials and design of historic windows and doors should be preserved.



**Repair deteriorated materials or features in place, if feasible.**

When it is infeasible to retain materials or features, replacement should be made with in-kind materials or with substitute materials that convey the same form, design, and overall visual appearance as the original.

**Design building additions on historic buildings to be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of an historic structure or site, while clearly reflecting the modern origin of the addition.**

- Additions should be subordinate in massing to the main structure and located toward the rear, away from the primary façade.
- Within historic districts or eligible historic districts, new infill structures should harmonize in style, scale, and massing with the surrounding historic structures.
- New window and door openings should be located on a secondary façade. The arrangement, size, and proportions of historic openings should be maintained; avoid filling in historic openings, especially on primary facades.



## OBJECTIVE 3:

### Augment the Streetscape Environment with Pedestrian Amenities

#### Sidewalks

- 1 Where a sidewalk does not currently exist, establish a new predominantly straight sidewalk along the length of the public **street frontage**. Create continuous and predominantly straight sidewalks and linear open space. Reconstruct abandoned driveways as sidewalks.
- 2 On Major and Secondary Highways, provide a comfortable sidewalk and parkway; at least 10 feet in width to accommodate pedestrian flow and activity, but wider if possible. Sidewalks and parkway widths on Local and Collector streets may be narrower, but generally not less than nine feet wide.
- 3 Plant parkways separating the curb from the sidewalk with ground cover, low-growing vegetation or permeable materials that accommodate both pedestrian movement and car doors. Brick work, pavers, gravel, and wood chips are examples of suitable permeable materials.
- 4 Create a buffer zone between pedestrians, moving vehicles, and other transit modes by the use of landscaping and street furniture. Examples include street trees, benches, newspaper racks, pedestrian information kiosks, bicycle racks, bus shelters, and **pedestrian lighting**.

#### RECOMMENDED



New wide sidewalk with attractive plants and street furniture buffering pedestrians from cars

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



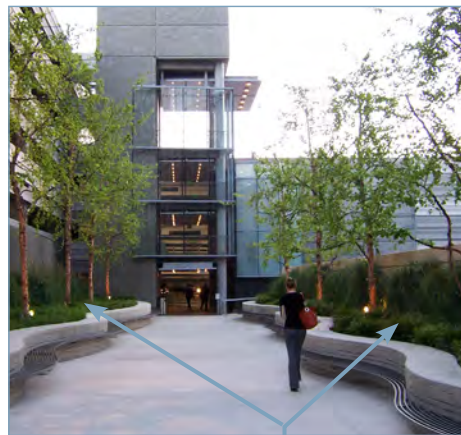
Narrow sidewalk with no buffer zone between pedestrians and transit

- 5 Plant street trees at the minimum spacing permitted by the Division of Urban Forestry, typically one tree for every 20 feet of **street frontage**, to create a consistent rhythm. Broadleaf evergreen and deciduous trees should be used to maintain a continuous tree canopy. Shade producing street trees may be interspersed with an occasional non-shade tree.
- 6 In high pedestrian use areas, install tree guards to protect tree trunks from damage.
- 7 Ensure that new developments adjacent to transit stops invest in **pedestrian amenities** such as trash receptacles and sheltered benches or seating areas for pedestrians that do not intrude into the accessible route.
- 8 Provide path lighting on sidewalks to encourage and extend safe pedestrian activities into the evening.

## RECOMMENDED



✓ Continuous tree canopy and consistent rhythm of tree planting



✓ Ornamental light highlighting pedestrian path



✓ Installation of tree guards protects tree trunks



## Crosswalks/Street Crossings for Large-Scale Developments

- 1 Incorporate features such as white markings, signage, and lighting so that pedestrian crossings are visible to moving vehicles during the day and at night.
- 2 Improve visibility for pedestrians in crosswalks by installing **curb extensions/bump outs**.
- 3 Emphasize pedestrian safety and comfort at crosswalks with devices such as pedestrian crossing signals, visible and accessible push buttons for pedestrian actuated signals, and dual sidewalk ramps that are directed to each crosswalk.
- 4 On wide streets, employ devices that decrease the crossing distance for pedestrians. Examples include a **mid-street crossing island**, an area of refuge between a right-turn lane and through lane, a curb extension/bump out, or a minimal **curb radius**.

### RECOMMENDED



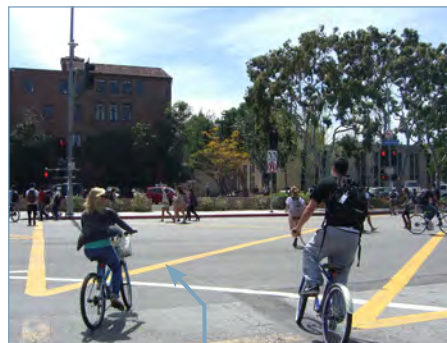
✓ Pedestrian crossing and curb extension



✓ White markings increase pedestrian visibility



✓ Landscaped pedestrian crossing island and noticeable white markings



✓ Create shortest possible crossing distance by providing diagonal crossing

## On-Street Parking

- 1 Locate **curb cuts** in a manner that does not reduce on-street parking.
- 2 Provide angled or parallel on-street parking to maximize the safety of bicyclists and other vehicular traffic.

### RECOMMENDED



✓  
Angled parking

### NOT RECOMMENDED



⚠  
Unused curb cut in front of business creates missed opportunity for on-street parking

## OBJECTIVE 4:

### Minimize the Appearance of Driveways and Parking Areas

#### Off-Street Parking and Driveways

- 1 Place on-site parking to the side or rear of buildings so that parking does not dominate the streetscape.
- 2 Maintain continuity of the sidewalk by minimizing the number of **curb cuts** for driveways and utilizing alleys for access and **egress**. Where alleys do not exist, concentrate curb cuts at side streets or mid-block.
- 3 Where alternatives to surface parking are not feasible, locate parking lots at the interior of the block, rather than at corner locations. Reserve corner locations for buildings.
- 4 Where the parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a visual screen or landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and the parking lot.

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Large swath of parking dominates streetscape



No visual screen provided to separate parking lot from sidewalk



## Off-Street Parking and Driveways (cont.)

- 5 When driveway placement on a front façade cannot be avoided, locate the driveway at the edge of the parcel rather than in the center. Ensure that the street-facing driveway width is minimized to 20 feet or less.
- 6 Wrap parking structures with active uses such as retail spaces or housing units on the **ground floor**.
- 7 Blend parking structure facades with nearby buildings by incorporating architectural treatments such as arches or other architectural openings and varied building materials, decorative screening, climbing vines, or green walls to provide visual interest.

### RECOMMENDED



✓ Upper level parking structure

✓ Office/Retail space on ground floor



✓ Climbing vines and landscaping soften an otherwise plain structure

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Parking structure lacks architectural treatment and landscaping, creating a harsh environment for pedestrians



Unnecessarily wide mid-block driveway



#### Objective 4: Minimize the Appearance of Driveways and Parking Areas

- 8 Mitigate the impact of parking visible to the street with the use of planting and landscaped walls tall enough to screen headlights.
- 9 Illuminate all parking areas and **pedestrian walkways** to improve safety. Avoid unintended spillover impacts onto adjacent properties.
- 10 Use architectural features, such as decorative gates and fences, in combination with landscaping to provide continuity at the street where openings occur due to driveways or other breaks in the sidewalk or building wall.

#### RECOMMENDED



✓ Landscape wall provided to screen headlights



✓ Parking area adequately screened by landscaping

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Poor interface between pedestrian and parking, lacking a landscape buffer between parking spaces and sidewalk

## OBJECTIVE 5:

Include Open Space to Create Opportunities for Public Gathering

### On-Site Landscaping

- 1 Retain mature and healthy vegetation and trees when developing a site, especially native species.
- 2 Design landscaping to be architecturally integrated with the building and suitable to the functions of the space while selecting plant materials that complement the architectural style, uses, and form of the building.
- 3 Design open areas to maintain a balance of landscaping and paved area.

### RECOMMENDED



✓ Balanced ratio of landscaping to paved areas

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Minimal landscaping added as an afterthought and does not contribute to architectural character of building

## Objective 5: Include Open Space to Create Opportunities for Public Gathering

- 4 Select drought tolerant, native landscaping to limit irrigation needs and conserve water. Mediterranean and local, climate-friendly plants may be used alongside native species.
- 5 Facilitate sustainable water use by using automated watering systems and drip irrigation to irrigate landscaped areas.
- 6 Facilitate **stormwater** capture, retention, and infiltration, and prevent **runoff** by using permeable or porous paving materials in lieu of concrete or asphalt. Collect, store, and reuse stormwater for landscape irrigation.

### RECOMMENDED



Utilize drought tolerant plants that require minimal irrigation



### On-Site Landscaping *(cont.)*

- 7 Provide canopy trees in planting areas in addition to street trees for shade and energy efficiency, especially on south and southwest facing façades.
- 8 Use landscape features to screen any portion of a parking level or podium that is above **grade**. Trees, shrubbery, planter boxes, climbing plants, vines, green walls, or **berms** can be used to soften views from the public right-of-way.

#### RECOMMENDED



A variety of shade trees are used on the south facade for passive cooling



Trees used for privacy and screening



## Open Space and Plazas

- 1 Incorporate shaded open space such as plazas, courtyards, pocket parks, and terraces in large scale commercial buildings. Design open areas to be easily accessible and comfortable for a substantial part of the year.
- 2 Orient open spaces to the sun and views. Create a sense of enclosure while maintaining safety, so that open spaces and plazas feel like outdoor rooms.
- 3 Connect open spaces to other activity areas where people gather to sit, eat, or watch other people.

### RECOMMENDED




- ✓ Courtyard designed for accessibility and comfort, connecting passive areas such as the landscaped water features to active areas such as outdoor eating establishments



- ✓ Pocket park connects open space to areas where people sit, eat, or watch other people

### Open Space and Plazas *(cont.)*

- 4 Locate sidewalk restaurants or outdoor dining areas on or adjacent to open spaces and pedestrian routes. Connect shops or office entrances directly to places where people gather or walk.
- 5  Landscape all open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking, recreational facilities, or **pedestrian amenities**. Landscaping may include any practicable combination of shrubs, trees, ground cover, minimal lawns, planter boxes, flowers, or fountains that reduce dust and other pollutants and promote outdoor activities, especially for children and seniors.

#### RECOMMENDED



✓ Landscape available open areas

✓ Shops and outdoor dining areas adjacent to pedestrian flow



## OBJECTIVE 6:

### Improve the Streetscape by Reducing Visual Clutter

#### Building Signage Placement

- 1 In general, a maximum of one business identification wall sign should be installed per business frontage on a public street. Rarely should more than one business identification wall sign be utilized per storefront.
- 2 Locate signs where architectural features or details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign. Place signs so they do not dominate or obscure the architectural elements of the building or window areas.
- 3 Include signage at a height and of a size that is visible to pedestrians and facilitates access to the building entrance.
- 4 In commercial and mixed-use buildings with multiple tenants, develop a coordinated sign program establishing uniform sign requirements that identify appropriate sign size, placement, and materials.

#### RECOMMENDED



✓  
Sign location and size is suggested by architectural features of the building

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



! Redundant Signage



! Competition of colors for text and background

! Oversized sign obscures building architecture and window area



## Building Signage Materials

- 1 At large retail developments, provide maps and signs in public spaces showing connections, destinations, and locations of public facilities such as nearby transit stops.
- 2 Limit the total number of colors used in any one sign. Small accents of several colors make a sign unique and attractive, but competition of many different colors reduces readability.
- 3 Limit text on signs to convey the business name or logo. Eliminate words that do not contribute to the basic message of the sign.
- 4 Select sign materials that are durable and compatible with the design of the façade on which they are placed.
- 5 Illuminate signs only to the minimum level required for nighttime readability.

### RECOMMENDED



✓ Quality sign materials



✓ Minimum level lighting to illuminate sign only



✓ Acceptable internally-illuminated signage

### NOT RECOMMENDED



⚠ Building facade is cluttered with excessive signage that lacks compatibility in colors and materials with the building and within the building facade

⚠ Haphazard sign placement



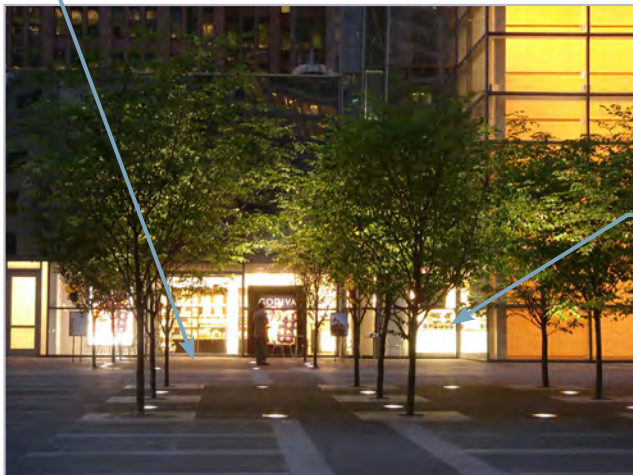
## Lighting and Security

- 1 Use ornamental lighting to highlight pedestrian paths and entrances to contribute to providing for a comfortable nighttime strolling experience while providing security by including **after-hours lighting** for storefronts.
- 2 Install **lighting fixtures** to accent and complement architectural details. Shielded wall sconces and angled uplighting can be used at night to establish a façade pattern and animate a building's architectural features.
- 3 Utilize adequate, uniform, and glare-free lighting, such as **dark-sky compliant fixtures**, to avoid uneven light distribution, harsh shadows, and light spillage onto adjacent properties.

### RECOMMENDED



✓  
Ornamental lighting provides for a comfortable and safe nighttime pedestrian experience



✓  
Lighting is subtle and contributes to building features

## Utilities

- 1 Place **utilities** in landscaped areas and out of the line-of-sight from crosswalks or sidewalks. Utilities such as power lines, transformers, and wireless facilities should be placed underground or on rooftops when appropriately screened by a parapet; otherwise, any mechanical or electrical equipment should be buffered by planting materials in a manner that contributes to the quality of the existing landscaping on the property and the public streetscape.
- 2 Screen views of rooftop equipment such as air conditioning units, mechanical equipment, and vents from view from the public right-of-way.

### RECOMMENDED



Rooftop equipment screened by parapet

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Electrical/utility boxes located in plain view from public streets and sidewalks

**Objective 6:** Improve the Streetscape by Reducing Visual Clutter

- 3 Hide trash enclosures within parking garages so that they are not visible to passersby. Screen outdoor stand alone trash enclosures using walls consistent with the architectural character of the main building, and locate them so that they are out of the line-of-sight from crosswalks or sidewalks.

**RECOMMENDED**



Trash enclosure incorporating architectural features consistent with main building and landscaping

**NOT RECOMMENDED**



Unscreened stand-alone trash enclosure



Exposed rooftop equipment visible from street level

## GLOSSARY

**After-hours Lighting** - Pedestrian lighting, intended to create safe, well-lit pedestrian areas in the evening and at night.

**Bay** - A window or series of windows, forming a bay in a room and projecting outward from the wall.

**By-right** - Projects which meet all LAMC zoning regulations and require review only by the Department of Building and Safety.

**Clerestory Window** - An outside wall of a room or building that rises above an adjoining roof and contains windows.

**Berm** - A bank of earth placed against one or more exterior walls of a building as protection against extremes in temperature.

**Building Frontage** - The maximum length of a line or lines formed by connecting the points representing projections of the exterior building walls onto a public street or onto a courtyard that is directly accessible by pedestrians from a public street, whichever distance is greater.

**Corner Lot** - A lot located at the intersection of at least two streets designated on the transportation element of the General Plan as a major, secondary, or other highway classification or collector street; At least one of the streets at the intersection must be a designated highway.

**Cornice** - A continuous, molded projection that crowns a wall or other construction, or divides it horizontally for compositional purposes.

**Cornice Treatment** - The design or style used to create a cornice, such as bracketed eaves, boxed eaves, exposed eaves, decorative bands, or a classical cornice.

**Curb Cuts** - A ramp leading smoothly down from a sidewalk to a street, rather than abruptly ending with a curb and dropping roughly 4–6 inches; Curb cuts placed at street intersections allow someone in a wheelchair to move onto or off a sidewalk without difficulty; Pedestrians using a walker, pushing a stroller or walking next to a bicycle also benefit from a curb cut; In the United States, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that curb cuts be present on all sidewalks; A wider curb cut is also useful for motor vehicles to enter a driveway or parking lot, on the other side of a sidewalk; Smaller curb cuts, approximately a foot in width, can be utilized in parking areas or sidewalks to allow for a drainage path of water runoff to flow into an area where it may infiltrate such as grass or a garden.

**Curb Extension (also called Bump-out)** - A traffic calming measure, intended to slow the speed of traffic and increase driver awareness, particularly in built-up and residential neighborhoods; They also allow pedestrians and vehicle drivers to see each other when vehicles parked in a parking lane would otherwise block visibility; A curb extension comprises an angled narrowing of the roadway and a widening of the sidewalk; This is often accompanied by an area of enhanced restrictions (such as a “no stopping” or “no parking zone”) and the appropriate visual enforcement.

**Curb Radius** - A term used by highway engineers, used to describe the sharpness of a corner. A large curb radius enables vehicles to go around corners faster; A small curb radius slows down turning vehicles; A large curb radius also increases the distance a pedestrian must walk to cross the street.

**Dark-sky Compliant Fixtures** - Shielded lighting fixtures which protect adjoining properties from lighting spillover and glare.

**Dormer** - A projecting structure built out from a sloping roof, usually housing a vertical window or ventilating louver.

**Findings** - The reasoning or justification for a discretionary planning decision, as prescribed by the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

**Gable** - The triangular portion of wall, enclosing the end of a pitched roof from cornice or eaves, to ridge.

**Grade/Grading** - The ground elevation at any specific point on a construction site, usually where the ground meets the foundation of a building.



**Ground Floor** - The lowest story within a building which is accessible from the street, the floor level of which is within three feet above or below curb level.

**Ingress/Egress** - A place or means of going in/out, respectively.

**Lighting Fixture** - The assembly for an electrical light that holds the lamp and may include an assembly housing, a mounting bracket or polo socket, lamp holder, ballast, a reflector or mirror and a refractor or lens.

**Lot Coverage** - That portion of a lot which, when viewed from above, is covered by a building.

**Mid-street Crossing Island** - A painted crosswalk, sometimes used in conjunction with a protected pedestrian island or bump-out, which provides opportunities to cross the street in the center of the block, as an alternative to doing so only street intersections.

**Mixed-use Project** - A project which combines one or more commercial uses and multiple dwelling units in a single building or development.

**Ornamental Lighting** - Architectural lighting fixtures, which primarily serve a decorative purpose, instead of a functional purpose, such as highlighting landscaping features and/or architectural elements at night.

**Portico** - A porch having a roof supported by columns, often leading to the entrance of a building.

**Paseo or Pedestrian Walkway** - A walkway that is typically open to the sky and that provides pedestrian passage between structures, or through landscaping, or parking lots, which is distinguished by ground surface treatments that provide for pedestrian safety and ease of movement.

**Pedestrian Amenities** - Outdoor sidewalk faces, public plazas, retail courtyards, water features, kiosks, paseos, arcades, patios, covered walkways, or spaces for outdoor dining or seating that are located on the Ground Floor, and that are accessible to and available for use by the public.

**Pedestrian Lighting** - Freestanding lighting fixtures not exceeding a height of thirty-six (36) inches from ground grade level.

**Pergola** - A structure of parallel colonnades supporting an open roof of beams and crossing rafters or trelliswork, over which climbing plants are trained to grow.

**Runoff** - The portion of precipitation on land that ultimately reaches streams often with dissolved or suspended material.

**Setback** - A placing of a face of a building on a line some horizontal distance from the building line or of the wall below; The distance of a structure or other feature from the property line or other feature.

**Stepback** - A variation in roof height, such that the height of the building decreases as it approaches adjacent lower scale buildings.

**Stormwater** - Describes water that originates during precipitation events.

**Street Frontage** - See Building Frontage.

**Subdivision** - The same as defined in Section 66424 of the Government Code; Subdivision includes a stock cooperative project as defined in Section 12.03 of the Municipal Code; An area of real estate, composed of subdivided lots.

**Sunken Entryways** - An entrenched path or building entrance, which creates a restricted view of one's surroundings; It is sometimes used to prevent excessive amounts of snow and/ or wind from coming into a building, and to trap heat indoors, while still allowing ventilation.

**Trellis** - A frame supporting open latticework, used as a screen or a support for growing vines or plants.

**Utilities** - Uses that provide the transfer or delivery of power, water, sewage, storm water runoff, information, and telephone services.

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