DOWNTOWN
DESIGN GUIDE

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Chpater 5:
Parking and Access

05 PARKING AND ACCESS

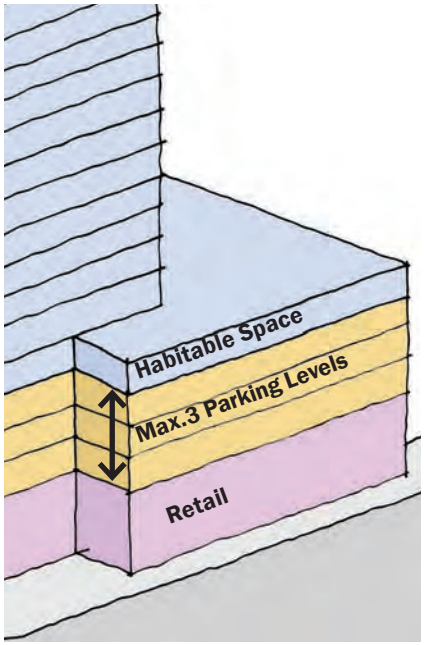


Figure 5-1 Diagram showing a street wall with ground floor retail and the maximum three parking levels with habitable space above.

A. ALL PARKING AND ACCESS

Locate parking, loading and vehicular circulation to minimize its visibility.

1. Parking required for a project shall be integrated into the project it serves. Public parking may be either a freestanding structure or integrated into a project, provided it is clearly signed as public parking.
2. Except for the minimum ground-level frontage required for access to parking and loading, no parking or loading shall be visible on the ground floor of any building façade that faces a street.
3. Parking, loading or circulation located above the ground floor shall be 1) lined by habitable floor area along all street frontages or, 2) if the project sponsor demonstrates that it is not feasible to line the parking with habitable space above the ground floor, integrated into the design of the building façade.
4. Where parking above the ground floor that is not lined with habitable space is permitted, a maximum of three parking levels fronting on a public street shall be allowed above the ground floor, provided they are integrated into the design of the building façade and at least one habitable floor is provided directly above the visible parking levels.
5. Drive-through aisles for fast food or similar use are not permitted.

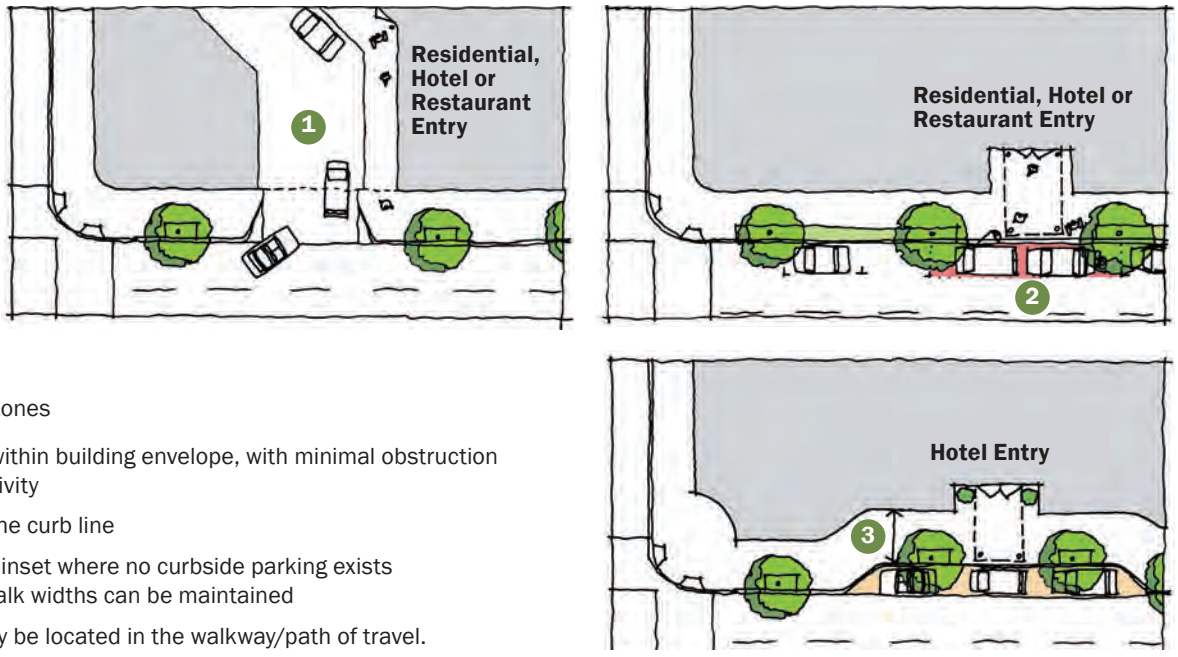


Figure 5-2 Drop-off Zones

1 Drop-offs occur within building envelope, with minimal obstruction to pedestrian activity

2 Drop-offs along the curb line

3 Drop-offs can be inset where no curbside parking exists and where sidewalk widths can be maintained

Note: no columns may be located in the walkway/path of travel.

Locate drop-off zones along the curb or within parking facilities to promote sidewalk/street wall continuity and reduce conflicts with pedestrians.

6. Drop-off, including residential, hotel and restaurant drop-off, shall be provided either 1) within the off-street parking facilities using the parking access or 2) along the required curb line where there is a full-time curbside parking lane, with no sidewalk narrowing. Exception: where there is no curbside parking lane and off-street drop-off is not feasible, a hotel may have a drop-off lane up to 80 feet long provided the required sidewalk width is maintained.

Encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation by providing incentives for reduced automobile use.

7. No more than the minimum required parking may be provided unless provided for adjacent buildings that lack adequate parking.

8. Parking shall be sold or rented separately from residential units and commercial spaces ("unbundled") in perpetuity. Parking that is required for residential use but is unused and all commercial parking should be made available as public parking during daytime and evenings.

9. Provide at least one secure bicycle parking space for every two residential units. Provide secure bicycle parking within 200 yards of a building entrance for at least 10% of commercial and institutional building occupants.

Limit the number and width of curb cuts and vehicular entries to promote street wall continuity and reduce conflicts with pedestrians.

10. Vehicular access shall be from an alley or mid-block on an east-west street where feasible.

11. Curb cuts and parking/loading entries into buildings shall be limited to the minimum number required and the minimum width permitted.

12. Parking and loading access shall be shared where feasible.

13. Parking and loading access shall be located a minimum of 25 feet from a primary building entrance, pedestrian paseo, or public outdoor gathering area. This guideline shall not apply to a hotel porte cocheres.

14. Where a vehicular exit from a parking structure is located within 5 feet of the back of sidewalk, a visual/audible alarm shall be installed to warn pedestrians and cyclists of exiting vehicles.

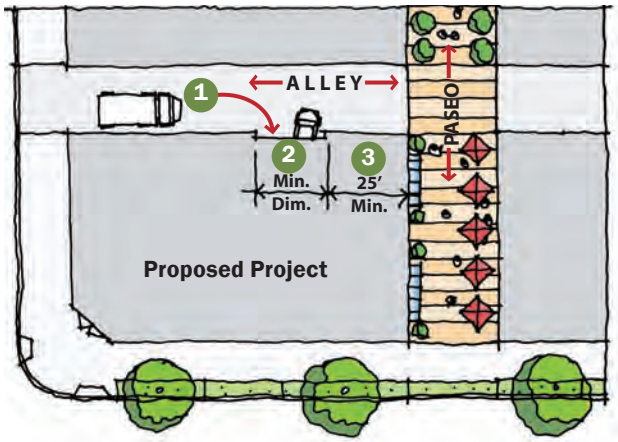


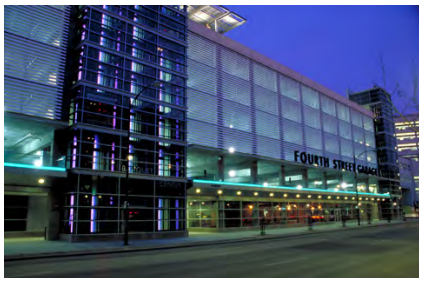
Figure 5-3 Vehicular Entries and Curb Cuts

1 Access to parking/service/loading shall be from the alley, and shared wherever feasible

2 Curb cuts and parking/loading access into buildings shall be minimum width requirement by LADOT

3 Parking and loading access shall be a minimum of 25' from entrances, paseos, or outdoor gathering areas

Precast panel and glass louver screening, plus photovolatic panels on top deck (upper), and metal screen with tower element marking the entry corner and vertical circulation (lower).



Example of a parking garage with a glass facade and backlighting that transcends function to provide an interesting architectural facade.

B. STAND-ALONE PARKING STRUCTURES

Architectural Treatment

Parking structures should exhibit the same principles as good building design noted in previous sections. Providing an exterior screen comprised of high quality materials that screen the underlying concrete structure can elevate the building's stature and contribute to the overall quality of Downtown's built landscape.

1. Parking structures shall have an external skin designed to improve the building's appearance over the basic concrete structure of ramps, walls and columns. This can include heavy-gage metal screen, pre-cast concrete panels, laminated glass or photovoltaic panels.
2. Parking structures should integrate sustainable design features such as photovoltaic panels (especially on the top parking deck), renewable materials with proven longevity, and stormwater treatment wherever possible.
3. Vertical circulation cores (elevator and stairs) shall be located on the primary pedestrian corners and be highlighted architecturally so visitors can easily find and access these entry points.
4. Treat the ground floor along public streets as specified in Section 4: on Retail Streets provide active ground floor uses along the street frontage of the garage; on all other streets the ground floor treatment should provide a low screening element that blocks views of parked vehicle bumpers and headlights from pedestrians using the adjacent sidewalk.
5. Signage and wayfinding should be integrated with the architecture of the parking structure.
6. Integrate the design of public art and lighting with the architecture of the structure to reinforce its unique identity. This is especially important for public parking structures to aid in visitors finding them upon arrival and getting oriented to Downtown.
7. Interior garage lighting should not produce glaring sources towards adjacent residential units while providing safe and adequate lighting levels per code.

Landscape Treatment

8. In most circumstances, streetscape and landscaping should complement the building design. If a parking structure is well-designed, it does not need to be screened by dense landscaping in an urban setting.
9. However, where the Reviewing Agency determines that conformance with the architectural design standards and guidelines in 5.A. is not feasible, an unattractive parking structure may be screened with landscaping.
10. A "green screen" that is coordinated with the building design may be provided, along with the required streetscape improvements.
11. Alternatively, an additional row of evergreen columnar trees may be provided in a minimum 8-foot wide setback and staggered with the street trees. In combination, the setback and street trees should screen the parking structure from view.

Streetscape can complement a well-designed parking structure.

In limited circumstances, a green screen (above) or dense tree planting (below) can screen an unimproved concrete structure.

A typical Downtown alley is primarily for vehicular access and loading.

Santee Alley is a pedestrian-priority alley.

Shared alley: primarily pedestrian with resident/delivery vehicular access.

C. ALLEYS AND BUILDING WALLS FACING ALLEYS

Maintain and enhance alleys.

1. No existing alley shall be vacated unless 1) vehicular access to the project is provided only at the former intersection of the alley with the street; 2) vacating the alley will not result in the need for additional curb cuts for other parcels on the same block; and 3) an east-west pedestrian paseo at least 20 feet wide will be provided in the middle third of the block as part of the project.
2. As a general rule, Downtown alleys shall not be gated. Existing gates shall be removed where feasible.

Use alleys primarily for vehicular access, loading and service.

3. The primary purpose of most Downtown alleys is vehicular access and loading. The exceptions are “pedestrian-priority” alleys as designated as “pedestrian-priority” alleys by the Reviewing Agency. Pedestrian-priority alleys typically are located in the City Markets district.
4. Access to parking shall be from an alley where one exists or can be provided.
5. Where there is no alley and the project includes frontage on an east-west street, parking access shall be located mid-block on the east-west street.

Provide access to utilities and mechanical equipment from alleys.

6. Electrical transformers shall be located to be accessed from an alley where one exists or can be provided. If located adjacent to a sidewalk, they shall be screened and incorporated into the building to read as a storefront or office.

Design building walls that face alleys to be attractive those who see them.

7. While they can be more simply designed than street-facing façades, building walls that face alleys nonetheless should be visually attractive.
8. Parking levels may be visible but should be designed to alleviate the horizontality and lack of articulation and to screen lighting from the public rights-of-way and surrounding residential units, as described in the prior discussion of free-standing parking structures.

Ensure that residents are not adversely affected by the use of alleys for parking access, service and loading.

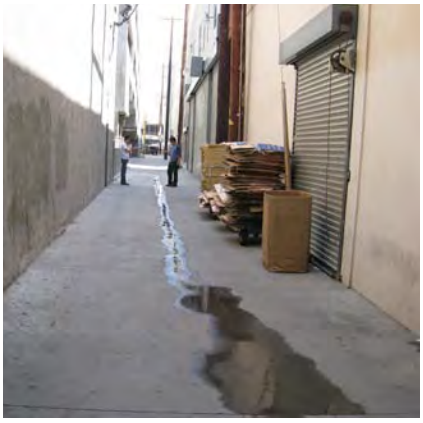
Urban downtown environments typically experience higher ambient sound levels than, for example, suburban residential neighborhoods due to traffic on streets and alleys, street activity and commercial ground-floor uses.

9. Each home buyer and renter in the Downtown shall sign a statement acknowledging that:
    - Sound levels may be higher than in other locations due to traffic on streets and alleys, street activity, ground floor uses, vehicular loading, and trash collection;
    - There will be additional development all around them;
    - Alleys will be used as the primary access to all parking in the Downtown and for loading, utilities and trash collection.
10. Residential units shall not be located on the ground floor adjacent to alleys in order to reduce light, glare, and noise concerns.
11. Residential units shall be designed to maintain interior sound levels, when windows are closed, at below 45 dB. Because the exterior sound level may exceed 60 dB, measures in addition to conventional construction are suggested to meet the interior standard, including:
    - Use of 1/4" laminated or double glazing in windows
    - Installation of rubberized asphalt in the alleys.

Incorporate green elements in alleys.

12. Subject to approval by BOE, install permeable paving to infiltrate storm water and eliminate standing water.

Residential units are not permitted on the ground floor adjacent to non-pedestrian priority alleys as shown here.



Typical alley with standing water (upper); alley with permeable paving along the center flowline to infiltrate runoff and eliminate standing water (lower).