

# RESIDENTIAL CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Multi-Family Residential & Commercial Mixed-Use Projects

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



Los Angeles  
Department  
of City Planning

## OBJECTIVE 1:

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

#### Site Planning

- 1 Work with the natural topography of the site to avoid dramatic and unnecessary **grade** changes by utilizing landform **grading**.
- 2 On hillside lots, use smaller terraced retaining walls to avoid massive blank wall faces. Use the site's natural topography to terrace the structure along the hillside.
- 3 Create a strong street wall by locating **building frontages** at the front property line where no setback requirement exists, or at the required **setback**. 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 residential amenities such as seating or water features, for example.

#### RECOMMENDED



Preserve trees & vegetation



Terraced development accommodates hillside slope

#### NOT RECOMMENDED



Lack of articulation creates feeling of large blank facade



A massive blank wall on the edge of the hillside is created when development is not terraced to accommodate existing topography

## Site Planning (cont.)

- 4 In small lot **subdivisions** where there is an existing average prevailing **setback**, apply the setback to provide continuity along the street edge.
- 5 Locate a majority of code-required open space at the ground level in a manner that is equally accessible to all residential units to promote safety and the use of outdoor areas. In mid- and high-rise buildings, podiums between buildings and rooftop areas can be used as common areas.
- 6 Use a 50 percent **lot coverage** ratio as a rule of thumb for low-rise housing developments and townhomes, especially in primarily residential, low- and low medium-density areas.
- 7 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



- ✓ Buildings placed around a central courtyard and accessible by all residents



- ✓ Primary entrance to residential building is located near metro station and bus stop


### NOT RECOMMENDED



- Massive building with no central courtyard or outdoor common areas



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

- 8 In dense neighborhoods, incorporate passageways or **paseos** into mid-block developments, particularly on through blocks, to facilitate pedestrian access to commercial amenities nearby, such that pedestrians will not need to walk the perimeter of a block in order to access the middle of the next parallel street or alley.
- 9 Activate mid-block passageways or paseos using water features, pedestrian-level lighting, artwork, benches, landscaping, or special paving so that they are safe and visually interesting spaces.
- 10  Install bicycle racks and lockers near building entrances, especially in residential or **mixed-use projects** located on Major or Secondary highways, or on Local and Collector streets near commercial services. Ensure bicycle racks are placed in a safe, well-lit location, convenient for residents and visitors.

### RECOMMENDED



✓ Bicycle racks conveniently located near building entrance



✓ Pedestrian paths through the site provide connections from residential land uses to nearby commercial uses



✓  
Mid-block  
paseo



## Building Orientation

- 1 Design small lot **subdivisions**, low-rise townhomes, and apartment buildings to ensure that all street-fronting units have a primary entrance facing the street. Alternatively, for Medium and High-Medium density buildings without **ground floor** entrances for individual units, create a prominent ground or first floor entry, such as a highly visible lobby or atrium.
- 2 Locate gathering spaces such as gyms, recreation rooms, and community space at the ground level and accessible to the street.

### RECOMMENDED



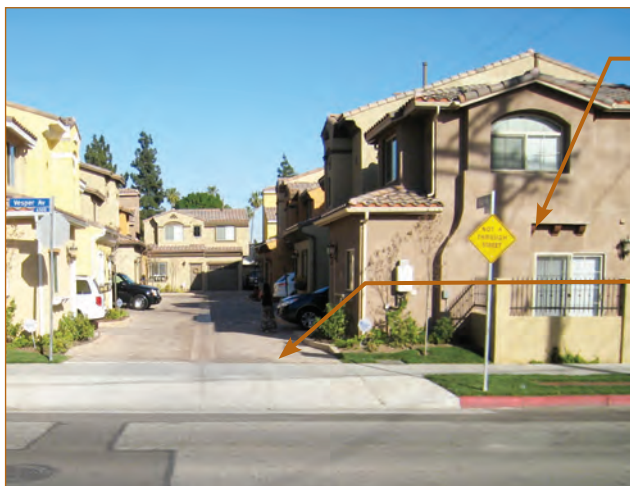
✓ Prominent stairway creates a visible ground floor entry



✓ Street-facing entrance to building

✓ Usable outdoor area for individual units

### NOT RECOMMENDED



Street-facing units should have an entrance from the sidewalk



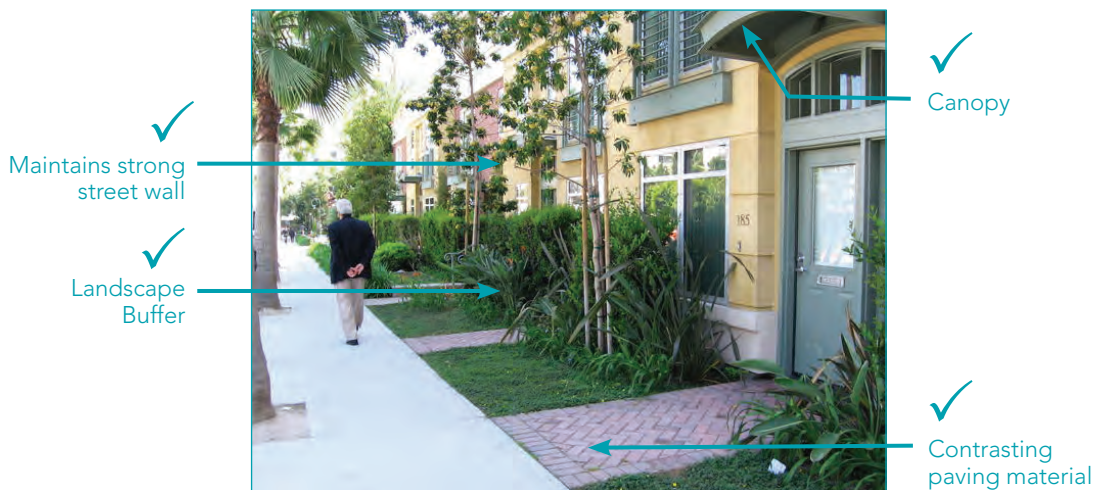
Missed opportunity for creating a livelier street frontage

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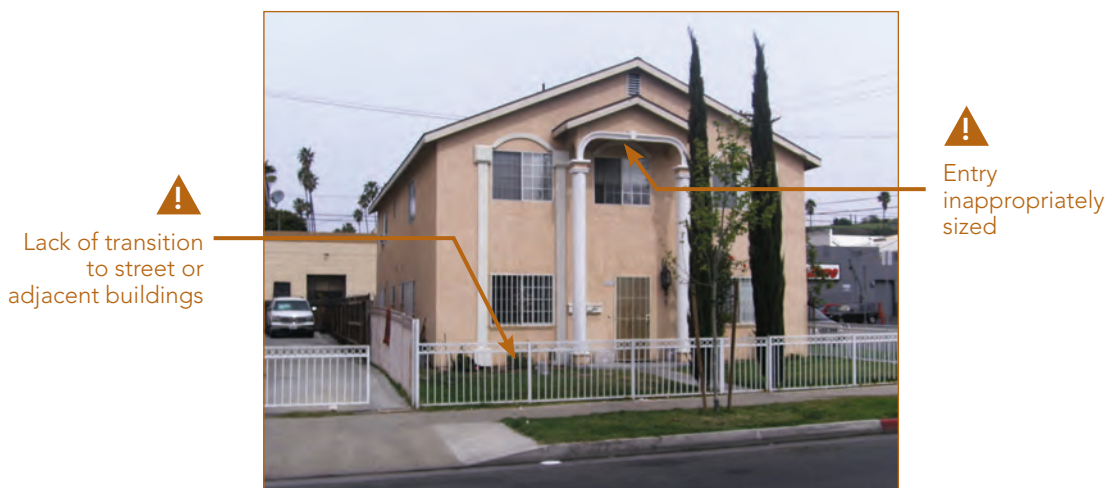
### Entrances

- 1 Incorporate transitions such as landscaping, paving, porches, stoops, and canopies at individual entrances to residences, and from the sidewalk to the front door. These methods should not protrude into required yards or negatively impact the overall street wall.
- 2 Entries should be designed according to simple and harmonious proportions in relationship to the overall size and scale of the building. Design entries in proportion to the number of units being accessed. 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 or slightly above, and unobstructed from view from the public right-of-way. Entryways below street level should be avoided.
- If stairs are used in common areas, such as an atrium or lobby, they should be highly visible and integrated with the predominant architectural design elements of the main building.

### RECOMMENDED



✓ Stairs integrated with architectural style of the building



✓ Highly visible street-level pedestrian entrance, accessible to all mobility levels

### NOT RECOMMENDED



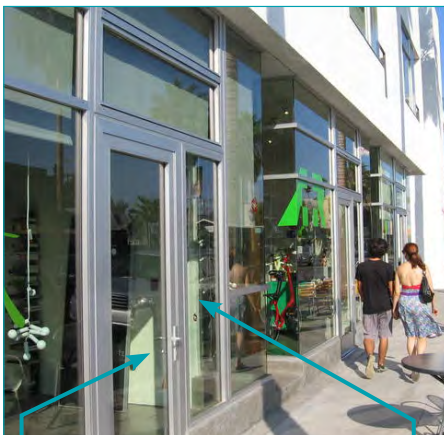
Sunken entries are generally less visible and therefore less secure



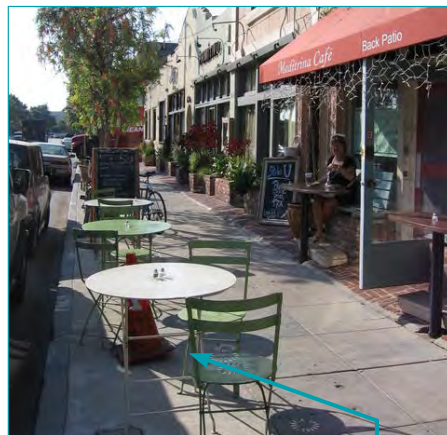
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- 6 Maintain an active street presence for **ground floor** retail establishments in **mixed-use projects** by incorporating at least one usable street-facing entrance with doors unlocked during regular business hours.
- 7 In mixed-use projects, ensure that ground floor uses maintain a high degree of transparency and maximize a visual connection to the street by providing clear and unobstructed windows, free of reflective glass coatings, exterior mounted gates, or security grills.

**RECOMMENDED**



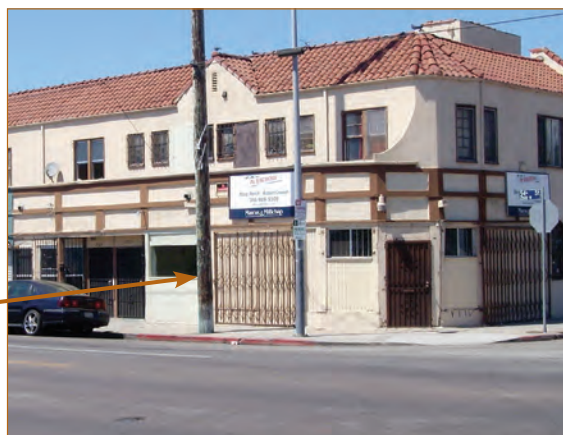
✓ Clear glass maintains visual connection between interior and exterior



✓ Outdoor seating activates streetscape

✓ Street-facing entrance maintains an active street presence

**NOT RECOMMENDED**



! Windows obstructed by security grills

## 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 For RD1.5, RD2, R3, R4, RAS3, and RAS4 developments, apply additional setbacks in side and rear yards abutting single-family and/or R2 zoned lots.
- 3 Where multi-family projects are adjacent to single-family zones, provide a sensitive transition by maintaining a height compatible with adjacent buildings. Mitigate negative shade/shadow and privacy impacts by stepping back upper floors and avoiding direct views into neighboring single-family yards.

### RECOMMENDED



✓  
New development maintains existing theme in neighborhood

### NOT RECOMMENDED

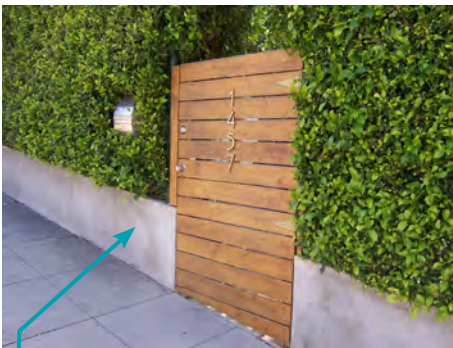


⚠  
Scale, height, and architectural style incompatible with adjacent development

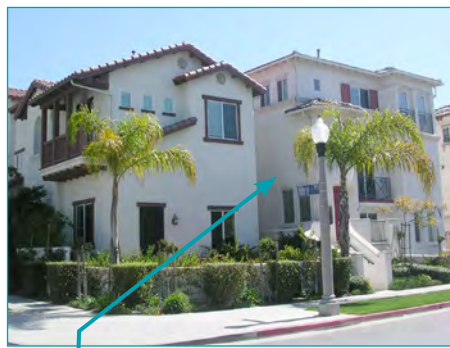
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- 4 When designing small lot **subdivisions** or projects built over two or more lots, provide sufficient space between buildings, articulation along the **street frontage**, and visual breaks to diminish the scale and massing.
- 5 Plant trees, shrubs, and vines to screen walls between property lines. Use decorative walls that include a change in color, material, and texture.

**RECOMMENDED**



- ✓ Incorporate various textures and materials to create visual interest while screening the property



- ✓ Providing space between buildings helps diminish scale and massing of development

**NOT RECOMMENDED**



- ⚠ Lack of articulation makes the building appear boxlike and out-of-scale



- ⚠ Repetitive, boiler-plate facades lack differentiation and individual character