

# CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

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## DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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### **Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUC) Development Principles and Guidelines for the Evaluation of Proposed Projects**

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**PLUC MISSION STATEMENT:** The Planning & Land Use Committee focuses on the broad variety of planning issues arising out of the dramatic redevelopment of Downtown LA. The Committee facilitates and provides a forum for public discussion and input on individual projects and general policy decisions re-shaping Downtown's landscape. Our goal is to encourage innovative and responsible land use planning that improves Downtown for all current and future stakeholders, including residents, businesses, workers, and the City as a whole. We recognize that the redevelopment of Downtown has both social and economic impacts, and that the on-going transformation of our metropolis is occurring against the background of cultural and historic resources that must be preserved. Our guiding principles encourage excellent architecture and design that is sustainable, transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly, and compatible with existing and developing uses in the many neighborhoods that make up Downtown.

#### **Criteria for Evaluation**

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##### *PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT*

#### **1. Complimentary Land Uses**

Downtown Los Angeles is a place that offers many choices and opportunities, a mix of activities and people. New uses should compliment existing uses by offering more, diverse, or distinct, but compatible uses.

#### **2. Design Excellence**

Excellence of design should be a high priority when considering any project and its possible variances in new development in Downtown Los Angeles. Downtown Los Angeles should welcome exciting, challenging design. These new designs should take cues from the existing neighborhood character as well as address existing building typologies, densities, and intensities of use.

#### **3. Area Enhancement**

New projects should work with adjacent buildings to form the public space of the city. The street level uses should be generally accessible and interesting to pedestrians and whenever feasible, new uses should be open nights and weekends. The provision of public plazas, esplanades, squares, and other urban open spaces with accompanying public amenities should be incorporated into the design of all new buildings.

Building form, surface, and scale should add to the interest of the area. Buildings of civic and community importance should be of an architecture appropriate to their importance to the community.

#### **4. Historic Preservation**

Projects containing buildings equal to or more than 50 years old should be encouraged to preserve these potentially historic properties when considering a proposed development in order to encourage the revitalization of existing neighborhoods, the preservation of neighborhood character, and the retention of

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affordable housing. Historic preservation includes façade restoration, the rehabilitation of interior spaces, and the revitalization of old, abandoned buildings and districts. Downtown Los Angeles is an evolving landscape, and our existing building stock should be re-used for new uses.

## 5. Reference to Existing Plans

Projects should be developed after referencing existing and current plans for their areas with particular emphasis to more recent plans that have had community involvement. But more importantly than the exact land uses proposed in these plans, the criteria used in making these plans and the criteria listed above should be the paramount consideration in the design of new projects.

Generally, plans that are the result of extensive community involvement and review should be respected and implemented. Current plans known to be relevant to Downtown Los Angeles include:

- **City of Los Angeles General Plan** (Department of City Planning, adopted by the Los Angeles City Council in 2001)
- **Central City Community Plan** (Currently undergoing an update, last update in 2003)
- **Westlake Community Plan** (Currently undergoing an update, last update in 1997)
- **Central City North Community Plan** (Adopted by City Council in 2000)
- **Los Angeles South Community Plan** (Currently undergoing an update, last update in 2000)
- **Los Angeles Southeast Community Plan** (Currently undergoing an update, last update in 2000)
- **Industrial Land Use Policy Memorandum** (CRA/LA & the Department of City Planning, released in 2008, policy guidance and interpretation based on existing land use and zoning)
- **Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) Bunker Hill Redevelopment Plan** (CRA/LA, adopted by the CRA/LA Board of Commissioners in 1967)
- **Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) Central Business District Redevelopment Plan** (CRA/LA, adopted by the CRA/LA Board of Commissioners in 1975)
- **Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) Central Industrial Redevelopment Plan** (CRA/LA, adopted by the CRA/LA Board of Commissioners in 2002)
- **Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) City Center Redevelopment Plan** (CRA/LA, adopted by the CRA/LA Board of Commissioners in 2002)
- **Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) Council District 9 Corridors South of the Santa Monica Freeway Recover Redevelopment Plan** (CRA/LA, adopted by the CRA/LA Board of Commissioners in 1995)
- **Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA/LA) Bunker Hill Redevelopment Plan** (CRA/LA, adopted by the CRA/LA Board of Commissioners in 1967).

## 6. Development Suitability

General Plan amendments, zone changes, and variances have the potential to establish unwanted precedents in downtown Los Angeles and should therefore any development proposal with such a request should be carefully reviewed.

## *TRANSPORTATION*

## 7. Appropriate Accessibility and Walkability

Properties should always be accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists from the sidewalks, and places that accommodate significant density should be in proximate relation to mass transit systems (bus or rail). An

emphasis on universal design should encourage accessibility for persons, especially those with extra needs like the young, disabled, and the elderly. Traffic calming initiatives and management techniques should be employed to increase the safety of pedestrians and encourage a multi-modal transportation network.

## *ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP*

### **8. Sustainability**

Projects within Downtown Los Angeles should seek to attain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification or other comparable standards. The development, revitalization and rehabilitation of Downtown Los Angeles neighborhoods should be conducted in a manner that increases the sustainability of our community and our City. Accordingly, all development should seek to reduce vehicle miles traveled, employ the use of recycled materials, utilize drought tolerant landscaping, follow Low Impact Development (LID) best management practices by maximizing permeable surfaces to reduce urban stormwater run-off, eliminate the waste stream, maximize energy efficiency, utilize on-site alternative energy resources, secure the highest in-door air quality, eliminate the use of toxic materials, and contribute to needed public amenities.

## *COMMUNITY DESIGN AND BEAUTIFICATION*

### **9. Sense of Place**

In districts of distinct character and quality, new projects and their landscaping should reinforce and extend such character.

Both the City of Los Angeles and Downtown Los Angeles have traditionally been diverse and eclectic communities, and that tradition of architectural and social diversity should be encouraged as our neighborhoods develop and mature.

The Downtown Los Angeles community identity should be protected, enhanced, and further developed in a manner that increases social interaction and promotes healthy lifestyles (i.e. promotes walkability, affordability, healthy dietary choices, reduction of pollutants, and access to parks and recreation).

### **10. A Collaborative Community Beautification Effort**

Events, projects, and a diversity of educational and awareness building programs will be continuously developed and encouraged to involve the greater community in its beautification. This should be done through such activities as tree planting projects, clean-up days, educational fairs, intensive community outreach efforts, and a community mural program.

## *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

### **11. Equity, Prosperity, and Opportunity**

The economic prosperity of the community depends on the opportunity for people to stay in Downtown Los Angeles to live, work, and play. Economic sustainability and self-sufficiency should be promoted through job growth and expansion, cultural tourism, and the sensitive management of new development in order to minimize the negative effects of gentrification. In short, new development should benefit all, especially the existing community.

## Development Guidelines

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### *SUSTAINABLE DESIGN*

1. *LEED Certification:* All projects should attain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or comparable standards.
2. *LID:* All projects should seek to manage on-site stormwater run-off through Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and best management practices.
3. *Landscaping Requirements:* The PLUC requires the review of the final landscape plans and details submitted to comply with the LA Landscape Ordinance and Guidelines. It is critical to ensure proper planter depth, drainage, soil mix, irrigation, plant materials, etc. The PLUC encourages the use of California native plants and drought resistant plants.
4. *Mitigation Measures:* No project will be considered until after the appropriate Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been conducted and the project has addressed the EIR's recommended mitigation measures. All projects with mitigation measures should follow through on their implementation before, during, and after the construction of the structure in compliance with their EIR.

### *HOUSING AFFORDABILITY*

5. *Affordability:* All residential projects with multiple units should provide an affordability component with a ratio of market rate, workforce, and low-income housing units.

### *HEIGHT LIMITS*

6. *Building Heights:* The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council area is the prime location for increased residential density for the entire region. The PLUC encourages the densification of arterials and transit oriented districts (one half mile radius from major transit stops and stations), the gradual increase of height limits into these areas, and the protection of lower density neighborhoods.
7. *Fence and Wall Heights:* Ensure legal wall and fence heights. Discourage chain link fences and concrete block walls at street frontages and setbacks. Encourage landscaping near and vines on walls as an additional screening technique. Murals should also be encouraged along long, blank walls of a project.

### *SECURITY*

8. *Anti-Graffiti Measures:* Encourage appropriate ivies and wall vines for the first 10 feet of exterior walls in order to minimize graffiti. In the event that ivy is not consistent with the architectural design, an alternative anti-graffiti prevention material shall be utilized.
9. *Security:* The PLUC requires that all projects include a description of security measures that will be installed to protect the project and the immediate vicinity of the neighborhood. The implementations of defensible space measures (windows to the street, adequate lighting, articulation of the building mass, and clearly defined private and public spaces) are encouraged.

### *STREETS AND ALLEYS*

10. *Green Streets:* The PLUC supports and encourages all projects to comply with the City's new Design and Streetscape Guidelines for downtown Los Angeles. The reduction of impervious surfaces in the neighborhood is a primary goal. Where feasible, infrastructure should be upgraded to reduce urban run-off through the use of bio-swales and stormwater retention basins that maximize groundwater recharge.
11. *Complete Streets:* The PLUC supports and encourages all projects to comply with the City's new Design and Streetscape Guidelines for all projects in downtown Los Angeles. The PBC promotes walkability

through the provision of adequate sidewalks and other multi-modal infrastructure. All streets and sidewalks should meet ADA requirements and are encouraged to meet the universal needs of the population (i.e. the elderly, disabled, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and buses as well as motorists).

12. *Street Trees*: The PLUC requires all new developments and redevelopments to plant street trees in every space feasible. Trees are recognized as public amenities that provide shade in the summer, reduce stormwater run-off, process carbon emissions, and release oxygen. Developers should maintain the trees for at least the first year after construction.
13. *Street Lights*: Infill missing street lights. Consider Historic Street lights where appropriate, and match street light choice and design to the existing neighborhood context. Street lights should be installed and upgraded to reduce light pollution and increase energy efficiency by using LED lights where feasible.
14. *Street Frontage and Activation*: All street frontage should be activated with retail or entertainment uses, social services, or other public amenities. Outdoor eating areas are encouraged where feasible. Where feasible, these uses should be encouraged to stay open into the night to help activate the nighttime street life of Downtown Los Angeles.
15. *Bus Turn-outs*: The PBC encourages that all developers not only dedicate, but construct bus bays or turnouts when feasible.

### *PARKING*

16. *Encourage Maximum Parking Limits*: Parking for all new development proposals should encourage a balance between adequate parking for tenants, visitors, and clients and reducing automobile dependence. Projects are encouraged to reduce parking requirements by coordinating development with public transportation and other alternate modes of transportation (i.e. walking and biking infrastructure and amenities). The use of Shared Parking should be utilized as a technique to reduce parking spaces throughout downtown.
17. *Off Street Loading*: Ensure adequate off-street loading for all projects in order to discourage dangerous on-street and double parking loading that blocks traffic.
18. *Avoid Exposed Garage Ground Floor Parking*: Projects containing surface parking should be screened from the sidewalk and well lit. Projects should have attractive human scale pedestrian entrances with the parking screened behind display windows, shops, housing units, landscaping, etc. The Committee encourages parking to be located behind and/or underground the building fronting the street.