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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

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.

Preamble

Pursuant to the City Charter, DLANC serves as an advisory body to City departments regarding development projects and other land use actions impacting Downtown Los Angeles. To fulfill that role, the DLANC Board of Directors relies on recommendations from the Planning & Land Use Committee (PLUC) regarding specific projects and policies. The PLUC shall generally consider the following Guiding Principles and Criteria for Evaluation as the basis for recommending support for any proposed development or land use action. In addition, the PLUC may encourage project applicants to comply with the attached Development Guidelines, where relevant and feasible.

Guiding Principles

1. We believe that land use and planning issues have both economic and social impacts, and we will give equal weight to each in the decision-making process.
2. We believe that land use and planning decisions under our jurisdiction must be evaluated in regard to their potential impact on all residents of the Downtown Los Angeles community, and to all others who come to Downtown Los Angeles.
3. We believe that Downtown Los Angeles has great cultural and historic significance. Our decisions will be guided by the need to preserve the culture and history of Downtown Los Angeles' neighborhood districts, but also to welcome initiatives that add to the richness of life in Downtown Los Angeles.
4. We believe that DLANC can influence innovative and responsible land use planning that improves Downtown Los Angeles for all its residents, workers, and businesses, and for the City as a whole. We are committed to working at our greatest capacity to investigate, evaluate and recommend projects that promote and support these guiding principles.

Criteria for Evaluation

PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT

1. Complementary 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 should be encouraged to preserve properties with potential historic, architectural, or cultural significance when considering a proposed development in order to encourage the revitalization of existing neighborhoods, the preservation of neighborhood character, and the retention of 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 where feasible.

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, including the City's General Plan and applicable Community Plans and Redevelopment (CRA/LA) plans. 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. Recent plans known to be relevant to Downtown Los Angeles include:

- **Downtown Development Guidelines and Street Standards** (City of Los Angeles Planning Commission, January 2009, **pending City Council approval**)
- **Los Angeles Downtown Development Strategy** (Central City Association and the Downtown Center Business Improvement District, 2002)
- **Historic Downtown Los Angeles Design Guidelines** (Los Angeles Conservancy, 2002)
- **Civic Center Plan** (Los Angeles Civic Center Authority, February 1997)
- **South Park Development Strategies and Design Guidelines** (South Park Stakeholders Group with the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, 1995)
- **Downtown Strategic Plan** (Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, adopted by Los Angeles City Council, 1994)

6. Development Suitability

General Plan amendments, zone changes, and variances have the potential to establish unwanted precedents in downtown Los Angeles and any development proposal with such a request should be carefully reviewed for consistency with recent land use plans, policies, and decisions.

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 considered to increase the safety of pedestrians and encourage a multi-modal transportation network.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

8. Sustainability

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. Projects within Downtown Los Angeles should seek to attain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification or other comparable standards. Further, 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

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, including the existing community.

Development Guidelines

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

1. *LEED Certification:* All projects should seek to attain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or comparable standards where feasible.
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:* All projects shall ensure that final landscape plans and details comply with the LA Landscape Ordinance and Guidelines. Landscaping downtown should seek to maximize water conservation and employ such techniques as drip irrigation.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

4. *Affordability:* All residential projects with multiple units should consider how they contribute to the ratio of market rate, workforce, and low-income housing units. DLANC encourages a mixed-income approach to residential buildings, developments, and neighborhoods.

HEIGHT LIMITS

5. *Building Heights:* DLANC 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 historic neighborhoods. The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council area is the prime location for increased residential density for the entire region.
6. *Fence and Wall 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 or other decorative features should also be encouraged along long, blank walls of a project.

SECURITY

7. *Anti-Graffiti Measures:* Encourage appropriate anti-graffiti prevention material, such as protective coatings and wall ivies or vines for the first 10 feet of exterior walls in order to minimize graffiti.
8. *Security:* All projects should 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

9. *Green Streets*: DLANC strongly supports and encourages all projects to comply with the City's Downtown Design Guidelines and Street Standards 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.
10. *Complete Streets*: Projects should promote 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).
11. *Street Trees*: DLANC encourages all new developments and redevelopments to plant appropriate, preferably shade, street trees where 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. TANNER BLACKMAN IS LOOKING INTO WHETHER THE CITY ALREADY REQUIRES BOND FOR STREET TREE MAINTENANCE.**
12. *Street Lights*: Infill missing street lights. Consider historic-style 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.
13. *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.

PARKING

14. *Encourage Appropriate 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 considered as a technique to reduce parking spaces throughout downtown.
15. *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.
16. *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. DLANC encourages parking to be located behind and/or underground the building fronting the street. Podium parking is discouraged for its potential to create canyons of parking, a disconnect between the pedestrian scale of downtown and its users (residential and commercial), and the reduction street safety for lack of "eyes on the street".

OTHER CONCERNS TO BE DEBATED

17. *Liquor Licenses and Nightclubs*: **The cumulative effects of liquor licenses and night clubs should be considered when reviewing new CUB's and CUB renewals. While individual bar, restaurants, and clubs may not have a large impact on the neighborhood, groupings of such uses or a concentration of such uses**

will have an effect and should be appropriately mitigated. Additionally, DLANC defers all security concerns and conditions regarding these uses to the LAPD, and discourages new liquor licenses within the Central City East residential district.

18. *Hostess Dancing*: DLANC discourages any new hostess dancing establishment in the downtown community. Renewals of existing hostess dancing clubs should be considered on a case by case basis. While DLANC defers all security concerns and conditions regarding these uses to the LAPD, such uses should be monitored and designed to reduce any potential for illegal activity such as prostitution.
19. *Signage*: Signage outside of designated sign districts should be discouraged. The development of new or expanded signage districts should be discouraged due to its negative effects on residential communities and light pollution.
20. *Dark Skies and Light Pollution*: All future development and redevelopment should be reviewed for its effects on the night sky. Up-lighting is discouraged and all exterior lighting should be hooded and directed downward. New street lighting should seek to find a balance between security, pedestrian safety, and reducing light pollution.