

DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE

CITY OF LOS ANGELES



Chapter 4: Ground Floor Treatment

A. GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT ALONG RETAIL STREETS

Design ground floor space on designated Retail Streets for retail or other active uses, orienting tenant spaces to the street and maximizing storefronts and entries along the sidewalks to sustain street level interest and promote pedestrian traffic.

1. All streets in the Historic Downtown are Retail Streets. Refer to the Historic Downtown Los Angeles Design Guidelines for guidance regarding ground floor treatment in the Historic Downtown.
2. On Retail Streets, ground floor space with a linear frontage equal to at least 50% or 75% of street frontage, as specified in Figure 3-1, shall be designed to accommodate retail, professional office, and live-work uses.
3. The ground floor space within 150' of an intersection shall be designed specifically for retail uses. Mid-block ground floor space may be designed for retail, professional office, and live-work uses.
4. Where Retail Streets intersect other streets, the ground floor retail space should wrap the corner onto the intersecting streets.
5. Ground floor retail space may be provided on streets that are not designated as Retail Streets in Figure 3-1. If it is, the ground floor retail space should comply with these standards and guidelines.
6. Required ground floor retail space may be located along the required street wall (see Section 6) or along a courtyard or plaza, provided the retail frontage is not more than 60 feet from the back of sidewalk and is visible from the sidewalk.
7. Required ground floor retail space shall be provided to a depth of at least 25 feet from the front façade and shall include an average 14'-0" floor-to-ceiling height. Note that the ground floor retail space may be occupied by other uses initially, but will be available for retail uses in the future when there is demand for such uses.
8. The primary entrance to each street-level tenant space that has its frontage along a public street shall be provided from that street.
9. The primary entrance to each street-level tenant that does not have its frontage along a public street shall be provided from a pedestrian paseo, courtyard or plaza, which is connected to the public street.
10. Wall openings, such as storefront windows and doors, shall comprise at least 75% of a building's street level façade.
11. Clear glass for wall openings, i.e., doors and windows, shall be used along all street-level façades for maximum transparency, especially in conjunction with retail uses. Dark tinted, reflective or opaque glazing is not permitted for any required wall opening along street level façades.
12. During hours of operation, open-wall storefronts are encouraged.



Good examples of ground floor treatments that include retail displays, outdoor dining and awnings for shade.



Good example of individual unit entry several feet above the sidewalk with porch and windows that look onto the street.



Common areas or recreation rooms with transparent windows can also line the ground floor of residential buildings.



Where blank walls are unavoidable, they can be set back with landscaping.

B. GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT ALONG OTHER STREETS

Design ground floor space facing other streets to accommodate habitable space and to avoid blank walls and visible parking.

1. Along other streets, at least 75% of the ground floor street frontage shall be designed to accommodate the following uses: retail, cultural, professional office, live/work units, residential units with individual entries along the street, and/or other active space such as recreation rooms or common rooms.
2. The ground floor treatment of those uses, except residential units with individual entries, should be similar to that of retail space, except that wall openings shall comprise at least 50% of the street level façade.
3. Residential units with individual entries should include windows on the ground floor that look out onto the street.
4. If a residential unit's individual entry along the street is the unit's primary entry, it must be accessible, that is, at the same elevation as the sidewalk.
5. If a residential unit's individual entry along the street is a secondary entry, the entry and any private outdoor space for the unit may be several (but not more than 4 or 5) steps above the sidewalk elevation. Private outdoor open space for the unit must be directly accessible from the unit, that is, at the same elevation.

C. GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT ALONG ALL STREETS

Orient buildings to the street to promote the sidewalk activity.

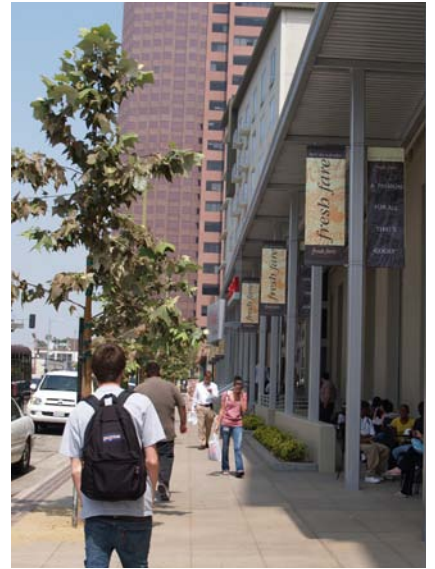
1. A building's primary entrance, defined as the entrance which provides the most direct access to a building's main lobby and is kept unlocked during business hours, shall be located on a public street or on a courtyard, plaza or paseo that is connected to and visible from a public street.
2. At least one building entrance, which provides access to a building's main lobby and which is kept unlocked during business hours, shall be located on a public street.
3. At least one building entrance, which may be either a building or tenant/resident entrance, shall be provided along each street frontage.
4. More public entrances than the minimum specified, including building and/or tenant/resident entrances, are encouraged.

Incorporate a pedestrian-oriented scale at the street level.

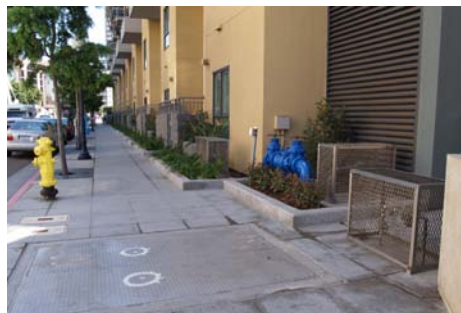
5. Street wall massing, articulation and detail, street level building entrances and storefront windows and doors, as well as the use of quality materials and decorative details, shall be used to promote pedestrian-scaled architecture along the street.
6. Architectural features that reinforce the retail character of the ground street wall and/or help define the pedestrian environment along the sidewalk, such as canopies, awnings, and overhangs, are encouraged and should be integral to the architecture of the building.
7. Awnings and canopies shall be fabricated of woven fabric, glass, metal or other permanent material compatible with the building architecture. Internally illuminated, vinyl awnings are not permitted.

Don't waste valuable street frontage on "back of house" uses.

8. Electrical transformers, mechanical equipment and other equipment should not be located along the ground floor street wall.
9. Electrical transformers, mechanical equipment, other equipment, enclosed stairs, storage spaces, blank walls, and other elements that are not pedestrian-oriented shall not be located with 100 feet of the corner on north-south streets and within 50 feet of the corner on east-west streets.



Good examples of buildings that promote sidewalk activity with overhangs, awnings and other transitional elements integrated into the architecture.



Examples of poor equipment location choices. A primary opening to a courtyard garden is walled off with electric meters (left) and irrigation equipment is in plain view near a building entrance (right).