

# DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE

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CITY OF LOS ANGELES



## Chapter 11: Public Art



**Icons and emblems.** Large-scale signature sculptural statements and gateway markers can create a dramatic first impression of a neighborhood.



**Civic Buildings.** Public facilities require public art that can embody the agency's mission while providing a more human and welcoming face to visitors.



**Plazas.** Plazas should be activated with more prominent, enigmatic artwork such as large sculptures, arbors, lighting or water features which include adequate space for people to gather and amenities to make it inviting.

Historically, cities embrace the arts of their time, and the character, personality and spirit of the city is often conveyed most vividly through its arts and culture. Downtown stakeholders have a proven commitment to the arts, for they play a significant role in cultivating livable neighborhoods. As a result, Downtown is a popular destination to experience public art, art galleries, museums, and theater and to celebrate cultural traditions in enhanced urban settings. For these reasons, public art in Downtown should aspire to meet the following goals and guidelines:

### A. GOALS

Integrate public art in the overall vision of the project's architecture, landscape and open space design by incorporating the artist into the design team early in the process. The goals are as follows:

- **Artistic excellence.** Aim for the highest aesthetic standards by enabling artists to create original and sustainable artwork, with attention to design, materials, construction, and location, and in keeping with the best practices in maintenance and conservation.
- **Image.** Generate visual interest by creating focal points, meeting places, modifiers or definers that will enhance Downtown's image locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- **Authentic sense of place.** Enliven and enhance the unique quality of Downtown's diverse visual and cultural environments. Provide meaningful opportunities for communities to participate in cultural planning, and a means for citizens to identify with each other through arts and culture in common areas.
- **Cultural literacy.** Foster common currency for social and economic exchange between residents, and attract visitors by ensuring that they have access to visual 'clues' that will help them navigate and embrace a potentially unfamiliar environment. This can be achieved through promotional materials and tours as well as artwork.
- **Style.** Artworks must demonstrate curatorial rigor in terms of building the city's collection of public art and shall illustrate themes and levels of sophistication that are appropriate for their location.
- **Responsiveness.** Without formally injecting art into the early stages of the planning process for each new development, it will either be left out, or appear out of sync with the overall growth of the built environment.

## B. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. All artwork erected in or placed upon City property must be approved by the Department of Cultural Affairs, and in some cases may require a special maintenance agreement with the appropriate BID or similar community organization.
2. Artwork in privately owned developments should be fully integrated into the development's design, in the most accessible and visible locations. Enclosed lobbies and roof top gardens are considered appropriate locations.
3. Artwork in retail streets and developments will need to be viewed in relation to existing signage and shop frontage.
4. Attention must be paid to how the artwork will appear amidst mature landscape.
5. Special care should be made to avoid locations where artworks may be damaged, such as the vehicular right of way.

## C. CONTRIBUTING TO AN URBAN TRAIL

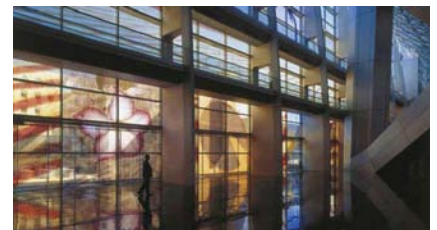
Ideally, each Downtown neighborhood would develop an aesthetic “heart” with unique characteristics. It could be represented by a neighborhood boundary, main boulevard, business core or cultural corridor. The art that defines the heart can also branch out to offer connections that form an “Urban Trail.” This trail could provide physical and visible connections, a path of discovery using elements like:

- Icons and emblems
- Civic buildings
- Street furnishings
- Plazas
- Parks, paseos and courtyards
- Façades
- Transit hubs.



### Parks, Paseos and Courtyards.

These spaces allow for closer, quieter contemplation of art, and can provide playful sequential elements.



**Façades.** An artist's sculpted or surface treatment can become a visual showcase that complements the architecture.



**Transit Hubs.** Strategically located artworks can serve as beacons to attract people to transit, and to make a commuter's wait more interesting.