

# **DOWNTOWN**

## **DESIGN GUIDE**

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### **CITY OF LOS ANGELES**



# **Chapter 9: Streetscape Improvements**



Corner curb extension at Grand Avenue and 11th Street.

#### A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CITY AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES

1. Recognize the shared use of streets not just for moving traffic, but equally as 1) the front door to businesses that are the economic and fiscal foundation of the City and 2) outdoor open space for residents and workers in a City that is severely lacking in public open space. That is, recognize that all streets on which residential or commercial development is located are “pedestrian-oriented streets” and design and improve them accordingly.
2. Implement the standards and guidelines in this document that pertain to improvements within street rights-of-way, including sidewalk configuration and streetscape improvements.
3. For improvement projects undertaken by public agencies, comply with the Downtown Street Standards and all standards and guidelines in this document, including sidewalk width, sidewalk configuration and streetscape improvements. In the case of sidewalk width, acquisition of rights-of-way or easements from adjacent property may be required.
4. Do not unreasonably burden property owners, developers and business owners with complicated regulations and protracted processes.

#### B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEVELOPER OR LEAD PUBLIC AGENCY

1. Provide sidewalks, parkways and walkways as specified in Section 3.
2. Install and maintain the improvements specified in this section.
3. Execute a Maintenance Agreement with the City by which the developer or Lead Public Agency agrees to maintain the streetscape improvements and accepts liability for them.
4. Install the ornamental street lighting specified in sub-section G and agree to an on-going assessment by the City to maintain and operate the lights.

#### C. SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT WHERE FUTURE ROADWAY WIDENING MAY OCCUR

1. Where 1) a street dedication has been made in the past or is required at the time of development and 2) the roadway has not been widened, that portion of the sidewalk located in the potential future widening shall be the Temporary Sidewalk Zone.
2. The Temporary Sidewalk Zone may not be included in the required sidewalk width.
3. Street trees may not be planted in the Temporary Sidewalk Zone.

4. On streets where continuous landscaped parkways are required, develop the Temporary Sidewalk Zone as a landscaped parkway. Design the irrigation so that the portion in the Temporary Sidewalk Zone can be removed without damaging the irrigation in the remaining parkway.
5. On streets where tree wells are required, pave the Temporary Sidewalk Zone as an extension of the permanent sidewalk with an expansion joint at the future back of curb.

**D. CURB EXTENSIONS AND CROSSWALKS**

1. Mid-block crosswalks shall be provided on all blocks 550' or longer, subject to approval by LADOT.
2. Curb extensions shall be provided at all corners and mid-block crossings, except at the intersection of two arterial streets (Major or Secondary Highways) and on streets where the curb lane is used as a peak-hour traffic lane, subject to approval by LADOT.

**E. PAVING PATTERN**

1. In the LASED Streetscape Plan area, the paving pattern specified in the adopted Streetscape Plan shall be installed.
2. On Hope Street the paving pattern used between Olympic Boulevard and 9th Street shall be installed.
3. In all other locations north of the 10 Freeway, the standard CRA/LA edge band shall be installed. The edge band detail is included in Appendix B.



Mid-block crosswalks on north-south streets improve pedestrian access.



**Table 9-1** Edge Band Characteristics

DISTRICT / NEIGHBORHOOD	EDGE BAND MATERIAL
Civic Center	NA
Civic Center South	TBD
Little Tokyo	TBD
Bunker Hill	Red granite, flame finish
Financial Core	Black granite, flame finish
LASED / Figueroa Corridor South	Black granite sawcut, bush hammered, flush joint
South Park	Endicott Brick medium
City Markets	TBD

Examples of district paving pattern and the standard CRA/LA edge band: without grout joints (upper two) and with grout joints (lower).



Streetscape improvements will vary by district and project.

## F. STREET TREES

### Tree Species and Spacing

1. Street trees shall be planted in conjunction with each project. In-lieu fees are not permitted.
2. Space trees as specified by City staff, but not more than an average of 25 feet on center to provide a more-or-less continuous canopy along the sidewalk.
3. Spacing from other elements shall be as specified by the Urban Forestry Division (UFD)/Bureau of Street Services/Department of Public Works, except trees may be 6 feet from pedestrian lights. The Applicant shall agree to maintain the trees so that the pedestrian lights are accessible for maintenance purposes.
4. Trees shall be species/cultivars that will achieve a mature height, given site conditions, of at least 40 feet on Major Highways Class II and Secondary Highways and 30 feet on other streets with a mature canopy that can be pruned up to a height of 14 feet. Typically street trees will achieve about two-thirds of the mature height specified in Sunset Garden Book.
5. Species/cultivars shall be as shown in the Master Tree List in the Appendices unless otherwise approved by the Reviewing Agency and UFD.
6. Required street trees shall be shade trees. However, if approved by the Reviewing Agency and UFD, palms may be planted between or in addition to required shade trees.

### Planting Standards

7. Plant minimum 36" box trees.
8. Parkways shall be planted with: 1) turf or turf substitute that is level with the adjacent walkway and walkable or 2) groundcover or perennials at least 18 inches but not more than 3 feet tall, except within 2 feet of tree trunks.
9. Where tree wells are installed as permitted/specified in Section 3, tree wells may be: 1) planted as described above; 2) covered with a 3-inch thick layer of stabilized decomposed granite, installed per manufacturer's specifications, and level with the adjacent walkway; or 3) covered by a tree grate.
10. Where gap-graded (structural) soil is required by Section 3, it shall be installed to a depth of at least 30 inches below the required miscellaneous base material under the concrete sidewalk for the entire length and width of the sidewalk adjacent to the project, except: 1) gap-graded soil is not required under driveways and 2) adjacent to existing buildings, the existing soil should be excavated at a 2:1 slope away from the building wall or as required by the Department of Building and Safety to avoid shoring of the building footing.
11. Irrigate the trees and landscaped parkways with an automatic irrigation system. In-line drip irrigation (Netafim or equal) is preferred. Spray heads or bubblers may also be used provided they adequately irrigate trees (minimum of 20 gallons per week dispersed over the root zone) and do not directly spray the tree trunks.

12. Maintain and prune street trees as specified by the Urban Forestry Division, including: obtain a permit prior to pruning and adhere to International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Pruning Guidelines and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 standards. These guidelines prohibit “topping” and “heading.”

The appendices provides details and specifications for the above requirements.

## G. STREET LIGHTS

There are two types of street lights in the Downtown: roadway lights (“street lights”) and pedestrian-scale lights (“pedestrian lights”). Street lights provide illumination of both the roadways and sidewalks to the levels required by the Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL) for safety and security. Pedestrian lights are ornamental and do not contribute to the required illumination level, but they may supplement it. Pedestrian lights contribute to the pedestrian scale of the street and add a warm glow of yellow light on the sidewalk.

1. On streets having an established historic street light, continue the predominant street light pattern, modified as required by BSL to meet current illumination standards, using replicas of the historic street lights as specified by BSL. If a project includes roadway widening, refurbish and relocate the historic street lights with supplemental replicas as required by BSL.
2. In other locations, pedestrian street lights, as specified by the Reviewing Agency and approved by BSL, shall be attached to each existing roadway light and a matching pedestrian light on a pole specified by the Reviewing Agency and approved by the BSL shall be installed approximately equidistant between the roadway lights. Pedestrian light spacing must be carefully coordinated with street tree planting in order to meet BSL spacing requirements and maintain the required tree spacing. An alternative street lighting pattern may be approved by the Reviewing Agency and BSL.
3. Pedestrian street lights may be set back from the curb on wide sidewalks installed on private property as follows:
  - Where sidewalks are at least 24 feet wide, the pedestrian lights may be set back between the clear path of travel and the commercial activity zone adjacent to the building.
  - Where the building is set back from the sidewalk, the pedestrian street lights may be installed on poles directly adjacent to the back of sidewalk.
  - All light sources shall provide a warm (yellow, not blue) light if metal halide or high-pressure sodium or, preferably, LED lights that produce a similar quality of light.
  - All optic systems shall be cut-off.

Topped tree



One year later



Topping and heading is prohibited.



Street lights.



Pedestrian lights.



Streetscape improvements should support activity during both day time and evenings.

## H. STREETScape PROJECT APPROVAL AND PERMITS

Streetscape project approval results in the issuance of a permit by the Department of Public Works. Three different types of permits are issued for streetscape projects, each with varying levels of review. Projects are reviewed for consistency with general City standards and specifications for projects in the public right-of-way. The following is a description of the types of permits required for Streetscape projects.

1. **A-permit.** The A-Permit is the first level of street improvement permits and is issued over the counter with no project plans. Items typically permitted through this type of review are new or improved driveways and sidewalks. A nominal fee may be charged for plan check, filing, and inspection.
2. **Revocable Permit.** Revocable Permits are the second or mid-level of street improvement permits. Revocable permit applications require the submittal of professionally prepared drawings on standard City (Bureau of Engineering) drawing sheets and are reviewed by the various Bureaus within the Department of Public Works for safety and liability issues. Improvements approved through the Revocable Permit process are maintained by the permittee. Failure by the permittee to keep the improvement in a safe and maintained condition allows the City to revoke the permitting rights at which point a permittee is requested to restore the street to its original condition. Projects requiring approval through the Revocable Permit process include improvements within the public right-of-way that do not change the configuration of the street. A moderate fee is assessed for plan check, administrative filing, and inspection and the applicant is typically required to provide proof of liability insurance.
3. **B-Permit.** The B-Permit is reserved for streetscape projects requiring the highest level of review. Approval through the B-Permit process is required for projects that are permanent in nature and developed to a level that allows the City to maintain the improvement permanently. A B-Permit is usually issued for improvements that change the configuration of the street, traffic patterns, or other substantial permanent changes to the streetscape. Projects subject to the B-Permit review process require professionally prepared drawings submitted on standard City (Bureau of Engineering) drawing sheets and are reviewed by all public agencies affected by the improvements. A fee commensurate with development is assessed for plan check, administration, and inspection. Construction bonding is required to ensure that the improvements are installed, and various levels of insurance are required.