



**The City of Los Angeles' General Plan Framework Element and each of the City's 35 Community Plans promote architectural and design excellence in buildings, landscape, open space, and public space. They also stipulate that preservation of the City's character and scale, including its traditional urban design form, shall be emphasized in consideration of future development. To this end, the Citywide Design Guidelines have been created to carry out the common design objectives that maintain neighborhood form and character while promoting design excellence and creative infill development solutions.**

The Citywide Design Guidelines serve to implement the 10 Urban Design Principles, a part of the Framework Element. These principles are a statement of the City's vision for the future of Los Angeles, providing guidance for new development and encouraging projects to complement existing urban form in order to enhance the built environment in Los Angeles. While called "urban", the Urban Design Principles reflect citywide values to be expressed in the built environment of the City, establishing a design program for the City. They are intended to embrace the variety of urban forms that exist within Los Angeles, from the most urban, concentrated centers to our suburban neighborhoods.

## THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN

- 1 Develop inviting and accessible transit areas.
- 2 Reinforce walkability, bikeability and well-being.
- 3 Nurture neighborhood character.
- 4 Bridge the past and the future.
- 5 Produce great green streets.
- 6 Generate public open space.
- 7 Stimulate sustainability and innovation in our city.
- 8 Improve equity and opportunity.
- 9 Emphasize early integration, simple processes and maintainable solutions.
- 10 Ensure connections.

The Citywide Design Guidelines supplement the Citywide Urban Design Principles. By offering more direction for proceeding with the design of a project, the Design Guidelines illustrate options, solutions, and techniques to achieve the goal of excellence in new design. It is important to remember, though, that they are performance goals, not zoning regulations or development standards and therefore do not supersede regulations in the municipal code.

### **The purpose of this document is to:**

- Communicate to the development community, in advance of application being filed, the design expectations in Residential, Commercial, and Industrial projects;
- Facilitate the fair and consistent application of design objectives;
- Protect investment throughout the city by encouraging consistently high-quality development;
- Encourage projects appropriate to the context of the City's climate and urban environment;
- Facilitate safe, functional, and attractive development; and
- Foster a sense of community and encourage pride of ownership.

## **HOW ARE THE GUIDELINES APPLIED**

The Guidelines are intended for the Planning Department, as well as other City agencies and department staff, developers, architects, engineers, and community members to use in evaluating project applications along with relevant policies from the General Plan Framework and Community Plans. To achieve the stated purpose, the Guidelines will apply to all new developments and substantial building alterations that require approval by decision-making bodies and planning staff. However, all "by-right" (see *definition in glossary*) development projects are also encouraged to incorporate the Design Guidelines into their project design.

Each of the Citywide Design Guidelines should be considered in a proposed project, although not all will be appropriate in every case, as each project will require a unique approach. The Citywide Design Guidelines provide guidance or direction for applying policies contained within the General Plan Framework and the Community Plans. Incorporating these guidelines into a project's design will encourage more compatible architecture, attractive multi-family residential districts, pedestrian activity, context-sensitive design, and contribute to placemaking.

## **HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES**

Property owners, developers, designers, and contractors proposing new development in Los Angeles should first review the zoning of the property being developed. They should then proceed to the Citywide Design Guidelines appropriate to the project, dependent on whether it is residential, commercial, or industrial.

The provisions set forth in this document identify the desired level of design quality for all development. However, flexibility is necessary and encouraged to achieve excellent design. Therefore, the use of the words "shall" and "must" have been purposely avoided within the specific guidelines. Each application for development, however, should demonstrate to what extent it incorporates these guidelines.

Applications that do not meet specific guidelines applicable to that project should provide rationale for the design and explain how the project will meet the intent of the General Plan, the Municipal Code, and these Guideline objectives. Whether the design is justified will be determined through required "Findings" in the appropriate section of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENERAL PLAN, ZONING CODE, CITYWIDE GUIDELINES, AND COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The approval process for new development is guided by the General Plan, Chapter I of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, and the Citywide Design Guidelines.

**City of Los Angeles General Plan:** Comprised of 35 Community plans, the General Plan is the policy document that sets the development vision of the community. It provides policy direction for land use, vehicular and bicycle circulation, open space and recreation, and infrastructure.

**Los Angeles Municipal Code:** Adopted ordinances that implement the General Plan by establishing land use and development requirements. The Municipal Code includes provisions for the establishment of specific plans and supplemental use districts.

**Citywide Design Guidelines:** Establishes best practices for designing high-quality development that meets the objectives of the General Plan. Certain items apply to site planning and others to building design and aesthetics.

Many neighborhoods in Los Angeles have adopted guidelines as part of a Community Plan Urban Design chapter, or special zoning designations such as specific plans, community design overlay districts, redevelopment plans, designated historic properties and historic districts. This document applies to all areas, but is particularly applicable to those areas within the City that do not currently have adopted design guidelines. In cases where the Citywide Design Guidelines conflict with a provision in a Community Plan Urban Design chapter or a specific plan, the community-specific requirements shall prevail.

## ORGANIZATION

The guidelines are divided into three sections: Residential, Commercial, and Industrial. Within each section are a number of design principles and measures that address the different elements of site and building design and environmental sensitivity based on land use. Each section of the Citywide Design Guidelines is organized by overarching objectives (e.g., Maintaining Neighborhood Context and Linkages). Each topic includes an objective statement followed by a list of specific implementation strategies. A glossary of key terms is included on page 47 of this document.  
\* Terms that are defined in the glossary and appear throughout the text are highlighted on each page for the user's convenience.

Guidelines that promote low-impact development and sustainable practices are designated by a leaf (  ) symbol.



## residential

multi-family residential | commercial mixed-use

Multi-family development in the City of Los Angeles varies across a wide spectrum of typologies, from low-density small lot subdivisions in suburban areas to high-density, mixed-use buildings in urban regional centers. Each typology presents unique challenges and opportunities. The following Design Guidelines are intended to address some of the most common, overarching challenges in designing multi-family developments encountered across the City. The prime areas of opportunity for attaining high quality design in multi-family and mixed-use projects include: maximizing sustainability in multi-family developments, establishing height and massing transitions from multi-family uses to commercial uses or less dense single-family residential; considering the pedestrian as the cornerstone of design over automobile-centric design; establishing landscaping and open space as essential design concepts from the outset of a project; and highlighting the role that quality building design can play in creating visually interesting and attractive multi-family buildings by contributing to existing neighborhood character and creating a "sense of place." More specific design regulations relating to individual communities can be found in each of the 35 Community Plans. The guidelines below are intended for developers and architects as well as for advisory and decision-making bodies when evaluating a project.