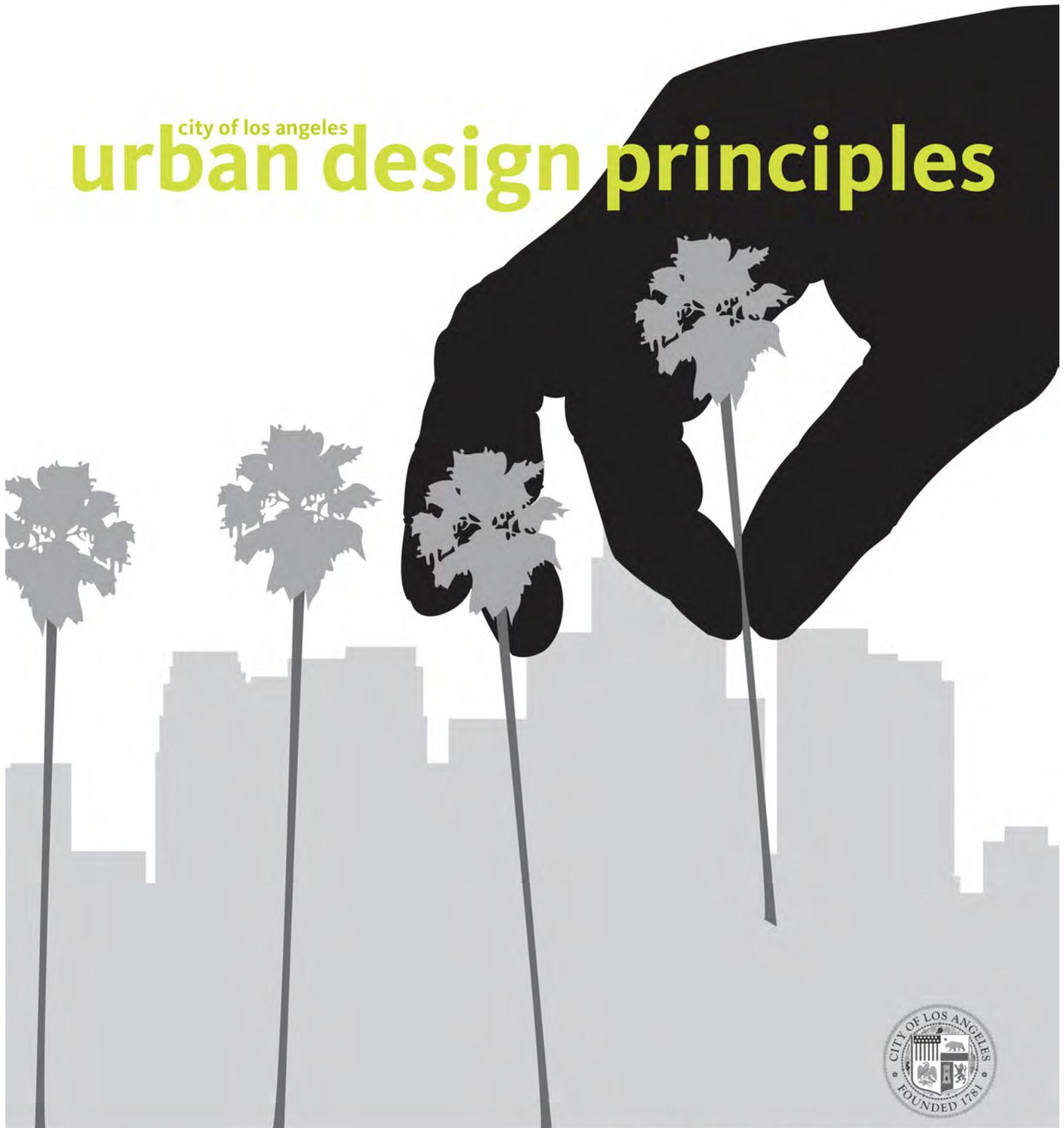


city of los angeles

# urban design principles



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Thank you to the many people who have added to the creation of the Principles over the years including elected officials, appointed leaders, community members, university professionals and students, business leaders, design professionals and non-profit leaders.

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# Urban





# Design

Urban design is a powerful concept. It holistically encompasses the disciplines of urban planning, architecture and landscape architecture to manage and transform the interactions of different aspects of urban life into a physical, usable form. It is the art of creating and shaping cities, towns and neighborhoods. Components such as routes, boundaries, districts, nodes and landmarks and their interrelationships provide the physical organizing structure of communities and the basic vocabulary for urban designers. Urban designers recognize the need for these elements to work together - providing functionality and a sense of belonging for residents. Successful urban design creates places that are economically, socially and environmentally viable. Above all else, it creates a city of mobility, activity and responsibility.



Image:

# introduction

Change in a great city is inevitable. It is an ongoing and, most often, a gradual process that comes in many forms. New development brings changes, as do new regulations, a shifting economy, new technology, and expanding knowledge. Challenges, big and small, test a city's ability to thrive economically. They also drive opportunities to increase the quality of life by consciously shaping the city to become more attractive, more functional and promote a better quality of life. The Urban Design Principles establish a platform that promotes and guides thoughtful future development of Los Angeles' urban environment.

Every great city is made up of great neighborhoods. Protecting and nurturing the character of Los Angeles' diverse neighborhoods is essential to the intrinsic character of the city and supporting connections between the neighborhoods is essential to its well-being. The importance of neighborhoods, connectivity and re-establishing people as a priority are the foundations of the Urban Design Principles.

The ten principles of this document address the diversity central to the City of Los Angeles by recognizing the importance of the multiplicity of cultures and neighborhoods, facilitating movement between communities and throughout the city. Rebalancing the needs of pedestrians, mass transit users and drivers, the importance of open space and protecting the health

and well-being of residents and our urban ecology provide the basis for the implementation of the Principles.

The practical implementation of the Urban Design Principles and their integration with development policy and standards is critical to their success. The Principles augment and clarify existing policies of the City General Plan. They are to be used as a basis for policies, guidelines or standards that deal with the built environment, clarifying certain planning objectives so that regulations are easy to understand and implement.

Early integration of the Urban Design Principles with private projects and public improvements is the responsibility of the city. With the assistance of multiple city departments, design based on these Principles can and should become a more active and integral part of the development process. This document is a tool that provides the foundation for a discussion about development and the future of Los Angeles for leaders, decision makers, community members, designers, developers, planners, city staff and all stakeholders. The incremental implementation of policies that respond to the Urban Design Principles is an achievable goal and will elevate the quality of development, enhance the connectivity of our communities and create a friendlier, more functional and healthier Los Angeles.

## 10

urban design  
principles

## prin·ci·ple:

(noun) **1** a basic rule that guides or influences thought or action. **2** an essential element, constitute, or quality, especially one that produces a specific effect. **3** a general truth from which other truths follow.

**Movement** : a city of mobility

1. develop inviting + accessible transit areas
2. ensure connections
3. produce great, green streets

**Health** : a city of activity

4. generate public open space
5. reinforce walkability, bikeability + wellbeing
6. bridge the past + the future
7. nurture neighborhood character

**Resilience** : a city of responsibility

8. stimulate sustainability + innovation
9. improve equity + opportunity
10. emphasize early integration, simple processes + maintainable long term solutions

# AMOV

# ement

Vermont / Sunset

***A city of mobility*** - A large city like Los Angeles is in constant motion. You can see it, hear it, feel it and smell it. It surrounds you. It plays a major role in your life. Unfortunately, movement in our city is usually rushed, oblivious and apathetic. As a result, destinations matter, but not the journey. What does that say - that these spaces are not important? The Urban Design Principles state that spaces are vital to the health and sustainability of our neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are where we meet; they keep us connected, they are what we love and dislike about our city and they make us Angelinos. We need the ability to move through and around our spaces. We need Los Angeles to be a city of mobility.

The Urban Design Principles aim to improve how we move in and around Los Angeles; to provide freedom of movement through connections, between and within neighborhoods, and through the city as a whole, through choices in modes of transportation, through safety and security and through the beauty of urban ecology. We want a Los Angeles that embraces the saying, "It's not where you go, but how you get there."

# develop inviting + accessible transit areas

Develop transit areas that incorporate a variety of uses and activities including transit modes, pedestrian and bicyclist needs, open-space and public amenities. Strengthening the relationship between a variety of transportation modes and enhancing the immediate environment makes car-alternative transportation more attractive and feasible for the public. The use of mass transit is sustainable, revitalizes communities and provides economic benefits to its users.

**“If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.”**

- Project for Public Spaces

The development of a successful mass transit system throughout Los Angeles makes car-alternative transportation more attractive and feasible for the public and provides environmental, economic and social benefits. Concentrating a variety of land uses near rail and bus stops increases opportunities for public transit riders and residents to easily access jobs, entertainment and amenities. The added activity enlivens the surrounding community. Increased linkages promote cultural diversity, housing choices and accessibility to jobs and open space.

Transit hubs are most successful when enabling effortless connections between transitions and connections to other modes of transit. Transit areas can support increased development and density, where appropriate, resulting in a more accessible and sustainable city. Mixed-use projects, combining residential and commercial uses, provide a balance that enlivens a transit area day and night.

Walking and biking are primary connectors for transit users. Design intervention encourages increased use and a comfortable and safe environment. Promoting pedestrian activity in these areas requires generous sidewalks and amenities such as pedestrian oriented streetlights and street furniture. Architectural treatment of buildings in those areas that incorporate continuous ground floor storefronts or individual residential access with transparent windows, entrances that are directly accessible from the sidewalk, articulated facades and human scaled elements encourage pedestrian activity. The bicycle, an intrinsic component of the circulation system, should be accommodated safely and appropriately with easily accessible way finding and secure parking.

what's out there

# develop inviting + accessible transit areas



▶ The Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority turned an underutilized park-and-ride lot on San Jose's light rail into a development with low-income housing and community uses such as a computer center and childcare center. Not only does the development generate revenue for the transit system, it also provides much needed affordable housing for the area.



▶ Opened in early 2011, The W Hotel and LA Metro partnered to create a transit oriented development that connects seven Metro bus lines, including a rapid line and the Red Line of the subway. The development was made possible with Metro's Joint Development Program, uniting public and/or private sector developers on Metro property at/ or adjacent to transit stations. The project includes hotel, residential and commercial uses.



▶ The western terminus of the Purple Line is the Wilshire/Western station. The station itself boasts large scale murals. Above ground, a condominium development was completed in 2009, and two Los Angeles Landmarks, the Wilshire Theatre and the Pellissier Building sit across the street.

▶ The Metro Orange Line, a bus rapid transit line, extends 14 miles between Warner Center in Woodland Hills and the Metro Red Line subway stop in North Hollywood. Opened in Fall 2005, the Orange Line provides benefits for several modes of transit, including bicycle and jogging paths as well as car and bicycle parking.



# ensure connections

The creation of simple connections within neighborhoods and throughout the city provides increased accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers. A well-integrated system of roads, paths and transit routes that encourages and allows for different modes of movement through Los Angeles creates a well-designed and efficient circulation system resulting in a vibrant and healthy city.

**“Urbanism works when it creates a journey as desirable as the destination.”**

- P. Goldberger

The physical circulation system of the city, consisting of sidewalks, paseos, streets, paths, urban trails, bicycle routes, alleys, bridges and highways should be legible and easy to navigate. The hierarchy must be clear, the connections simple. This allows residents and visitors to move about the city, community or neighborhood comfortably and efficiently.

Street signs should be easily understandable by all people, whether first time visitors or the visually impaired. Effective signage provides a visual linkage between areas and eases wayfinding to landmarks and transit. Wayfinding maps and information kiosks facilitate navigation, connect activity centers, direct flow, may demonstrate an area’s history and ultimately, enhance the human experience.

When transitioning from the public realm to the private realm, maximize compatibility with edges of a development and the street

frontages, abutting and adjacent uses, create connections with surroundings and build upon the public commitments to movement and flow. Urban furnishings with similar styles can be used to visually accentuate circulation routes within or between districts and neighborhoods. Appropriate development standards and neighborhood guidelines for site amenities support connectivity. As Los Angeles is a hybrid of differing street and development patterns, successful linkages address this by connecting natural landscapes and urban cores in a transparent and accessible manner, celebrating the city’s diversity as well as identity.

what's out there

# ensure connections



▶ The City of Austin has over 50 miles of scenic paths covering all areas of the city. The trails vary from paved right of ways next to streets, trails designed for bicyclists and paths that follow bodies of water. The trails connect across rural and urban areas. The climate of Austin makes it possible for these parks to be used year-round. They are maintained by the City's Parks and Recreation Department.



▶ Created by the Center City Business Improvement District, Walk!Philadelphia has the largest pedestrian sign system in America. Icons and colors distinguish neighborhoods from each other. The signage contains small maps that indicate a 10-minute walking radius as well as a "You Are Here" star that makes it easy to navigate landmarks and commercial areas throughout the city. The maps also show a 2 and 5 mile radius to ground the pedestrian. The signage connects the city on a pedestrian and mass-transit scale.



▶ Bikestation in Washington, D.C. houses over 100 bicycles and is located adjacent to Union Station, a commuting hub. It is operated by Mobis, a company that has created similar projects across the country. The facility includes bike parking, repair, sales and rental bikes, as well as a changing room and lockers. The station is strategically located in an area with the most intermodal transit options in the city.

▶ The Regional Connector in Los Angeles, scheduled to be completed in 2019, will create a light rail, transit link between the Metro's Blue/Expo Lines and the Gold Line. Located in Downtown Los Angeles, the Regional Connector will make it possible to travel between Azusa and Long Beach and East Los Angeles and Culver City Without changing trains. Besides minimizing the need for transfers, the project will provide access for over 16,000 new transit riders.



# produce great, green streets

Design streets to incorporate elements that enhance human scale, embrace neighborhood character, provide green infrastructure and balance needs for many modes of sustainable transit, including pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles and transit. Our streets, which are more than conduits of movement, incorporate sustainable, green infrastructure, to provide open space and easy access to the outdoors and celebrated Los Angeles climate.

**“A great street should be a most desirable place to be, to spend time, to live, to play, to work, at the same time that it markedly contributes to what a city should be.”**

- Allan B. Jacobs

Streets and alleys serve many purposes, besides the singular and traditional purpose of simply moving vehicles. The enhancement of 6,500 miles of streets and 900 miles of alleys in the city of Los Angeles provides a significant opportunity to change the character of the urban environment. Functionality, sustainable features and amenities create great, green streets.

A combination of vertical elements (trees, palms, spires, towers and windows) and horizontal elements (linear boulevards, streetscapes, cornices, bands, building wings and perspectives) elements keeps pedestrians engaged and interested. Public art provides a character defining feature for our streets and raises awareness. The art may be innovative and experimental; and not limited to traditional sculpture or murals. Screening or enhancing street utilities transforms them into a positive element of the visual environment by camouflaging the necessary but unappealing elements.

Landscape is the primary contributor to the greening of streets. Street trees are the most important element of an enhanced streetscape, providing the foundation for further improvements. Landscape provides environmental benefits by creating shade, reducing heat island effect, filtering pollutants and assisting with stormwater management. It enhances the overall aesthetic quality of streets by adding visual interest and scale and beauty. Trees and planters contribute to safer sidewalks by buffering pedestrians and /or bicyclists from vehicular traffic allowing the streets to contribute to the open space of the city rather than merely a circulation element. Creating streets can work for all modes of transport all the time or can be special emphasis streets. Streets can be created to work for all modes of transport all of the time or they can be redesigned to emphasize a particular mode, such as a pedestrian street, goods movement street, or a bicycle street.

## what's out there

# produce great, green streets

▶ Prior to 2008, Elmer Avenue in Sun Valley was a neighborhood street that lacked sidewalks, streetlights, curbs and storm drains. The Departments of Public Works at the City and the County worked with non-profit organizations and street residents to turn Elmer into a model for future green street projects. The street now has fundamental amenities, such as stormwater capture and filtration, for its residents.



▶ The City of Portland is pioneering a stormwater management program in order to increase urban green space and reduce the demand on the city's sewer system. Green streets in this city are pioneered by the Bureau of Environmental Services. Non-profits and other governmental offices provide support as well, and in some cases, design was done in concert with universities in the Portland area. The green street interventions vary from bioswales to rainwater gardens and stormwater planters.



▼ South Group, a development company, turned a parking lot on the corner of 11th and Grand in Downtown Los Angeles into a mixed-use building, certified LEED silver and gold. Part of this development included an improvement at this stretch of Grand that includes plantings for stormwater management as well as street furniture including benches and trash cans. The street furniture is complemented by active ground floor commercial uses, where visitors and residents take advantage of the street's design.

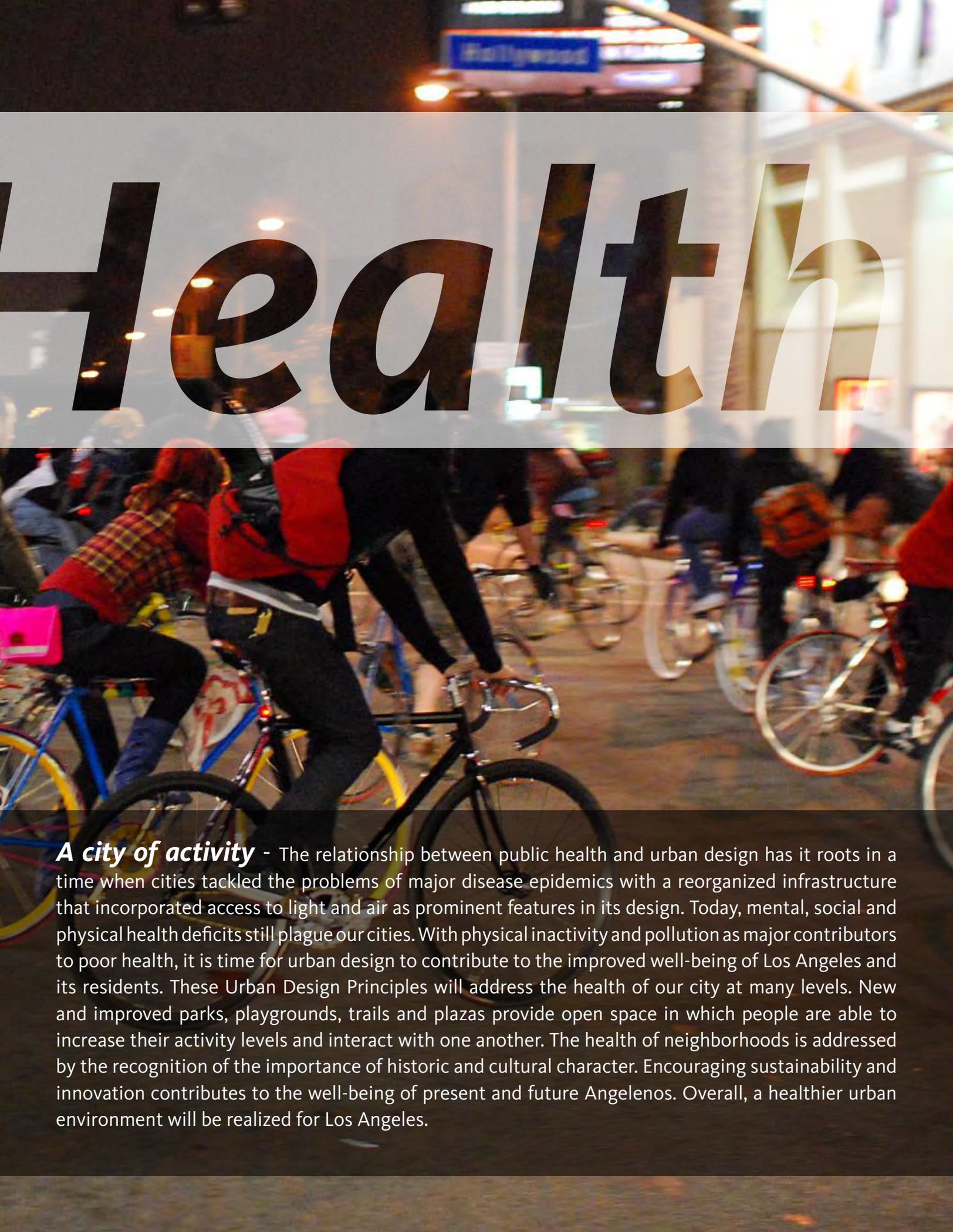


◀ Larchmont Boulevard, located near Hancock Park in the heart of Los Angeles, exists as a great green street. The buildings along the retail strip that extends from Beverly Boulevard to First Street are of pedestrian scale. Angled parking and short crosswalks makes it an easy street for someone to walk. Comfortable sidewalks and large trees provide shade. Amenities such as street lights and benches accommodate pedestrians. The Street is maintained by the Larchmont Boulevard Association.





Image : AI "digablesoul", 2008



# Health

**A city of activity** - The relationship between public health and urban design has its roots in a time when cities tackled the problems of major disease epidemics with a reorganized infrastructure that incorporated access to light and air as prominent features in its design. Today, mental, social and physical health deficits still plague our cities. With physical inactivity and pollution as major contributors to poor health, it is time for urban design to contribute to the improved well-being of Los Angeles and its residents. These Urban Design Principles will address the health of our city at many levels. New and improved parks, playgrounds, trails and plazas provide open space in which people are able to increase their activity levels and interact with one another. The health of neighborhoods is addressed by the recognition of the importance of historic and cultural character. Encouraging sustainability and innovation contributes to the well-being of present and future Angelenos. Overall, a healthier urban environment will be realized for Los Angeles.

## 4

# generate public open space

The creation of public open space is essential to the health of residents and the physical environment. Increasing open space, of which Los Angeles has much less than cities of comparable size, is a fundamental urban design goal. Open space can be created and increased by programming a connected network of physical linkages and creative use of available public rights of way. Streets, alleys, sidewalks and adjacent areas, also offer opportunities for small scale gathering, creative programming, or contemplative parks and plazas with active linkage connections.

**“Open space should be within walking [distance of] the pedestrian shed of every dwelling. The pedestrian shed is the measure of urbanism.”**

- Andres Duany

Research has shown that residents within a three minute walk of open space utilize that space more often than those who live further away. Open space is critical to increased physical activity and a connection to the physical environment. While constructing traditional parks at the recommended 1500 linear feet intervals or 750 foot radius may be difficult, that goal may also be reached by enhancing a nearby sidewalk, converting unused street dedications, creating a community garden from a publicly held vacant lot, or greening a neighborhood alley to enhance the pedestrian, transit rider or bicyclist's experience. Applying a creative definition of open space will challenge designers to examine the potential of utilizing these areas in non-traditional ways. These spaces provide an opportunity for planting, watershed management, art, social interaction, recreation and enjoyment of everyday life.

Active open spaces increases the public's perception of safety. Urban furnishings invite passive and active engagement within public areas. Street furniture, high quality materials, lighting and curb and sidewalk treatments provide important amenities in the public realm. Public art can be an integral and interactive feature that provides a focal point or a facilitator of social interaction in a public space.

Open space is an asset for the community and the economy, especially in a city where the weather provides year-round useability. Great open spaces have the power to attract a diverse group of people on a regular basis and provide a variety of social interaction, programming or amenities and become a destination within the city or neighborhood.

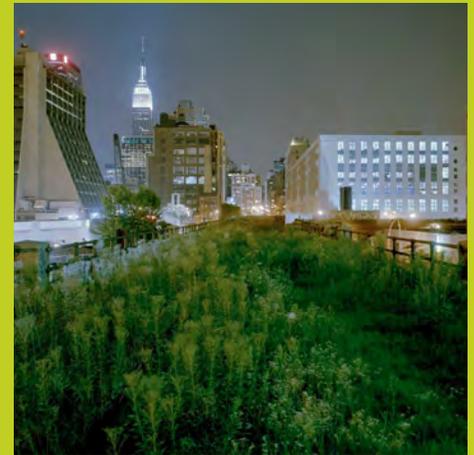
what's out there

# generate public open space



◀ At the intersection of Castro and Market Streets in San Francisco lies the 17th Street “Castro Commons.” What started as a pilot project in 2009 to claim excess right of way, has become a permanent plaza that features several seating options and a terra-cotta color to distinguish it from the street and the historic MUNI F-Line Streetcar right of way. The space is mostly used by the Castro Community Benefit District, however the flexible seating allows for a wide variety of uses, from people watching to impromptu music performances.

▶ The High Line, an abandoned railroad track for freight traffic in the 1930s, was turned into a new public space after Friends of the High Line formed in 1999, as New York City threatened to demolish it. In 2002, the project gained the city’s support, and in 2006 the park began construction. In 2011, the second phase of the park opened to the public. Section 2 runs from 20th Street to 30th Street and includes scenic vistas, a variety of seating areas, meandering pathways and naturalistic plantings.



▶ Augustus Hawkins Park exists along Compton and Slauson Boulevards in South LA. The open space was once a cement pipe storage yard and it was transformed into an 8.5 acre park. The park contains rolling hills, native plants and several tree species. The park is also home to the Evan Frankel Discovery Center, which provides information about a wide range of environmental issues and an emphasis on children’s program.



# reinforce walkability, bikeability + wellbeing

Design of the urban environment that integrates physical activity into daily life is central to the health of the city. The creation of more opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists to effortlessly connect public open space reinforces walkability and wellbeing. Today's Los Angeles has less activity choices for residents than those typically found in other urban centers. Increasing walkability and bikeability will increase the opportunity for physical activity.

**“[If a city wants to be a] lively, attractive, safe and sustainable city [it must] be sweet to its pedestrians, sweet to its cyclists.”**

- Jan Gehl

Pedestrian and bike friendly cities improve the quality of life for residents. Walking and biking contribute to a healthier lifestyle and cleaner environment while decreasing our carbon footprint.

There are many mechanisms by which to support pedestrian and bicyclist comfort and movement. Spaces framed by human scaled buildings appeal to pedestrians as do facades with openings along sidewalks. Sidewalk widths should comfortably accommodate pedestrians. Thoroughfares should have adequate buffers from vehicles to accommodate increased pedestrian and bicycle activity safely. Active entrances that minimize driveways and parking access on main streets enhance pedestrian movement and safety for bicycles. Screening parking lots and parking structures or locating parking off the primary roadway

lessens the visual impact of the car. Providing facilities for bicyclists such as secure parking, repairs, showers and a safe travel network, can increase the number of users.

Streets in the City of Los Angeles that are underutilized by automobiles would be better transformed into bike and walking trails that are part of a citywide system. An improved street system of linear park-like open space in the existing fabric of the city that integrates active experiences such as walking, jogging and cycling can be developed as individual projects are implemented. Everyone can engage in physical activity while using the streets for their daily needs, creating a more vibrant and accessible city and a healthier public environment.

what's out there

# reinforce walkability, bikeability + wellbeing



◀ One of the main streets in the San Fernando Valley, Ventura Boulevard, has a rich history. The Sherman Oaks section of the Boulevard boasts new streetscape improvements including landscaped medians, pedestrian lighting and streetscape furniture. The street is closed down for a day every fall for the Sherman Oaks Street Fair, pictured on the left. The Fair includes, food, entertainment and booths for local crafts.

▶ Pearl Street is a four block pedestrian mall located in Downtown Boulder, Colorado. The mall houses both local and nationally recognized businesses as well as the Boulder County Courthouse. Pearl Street was improved thanks to city and federal funds under the Community Housing and Development Act. Free bicycle parking and pedestrian amenities including several public art installations, a children's play area and a fountain contribute to its success as a shopping destination and a public space.



▶ The City of Long Beach has become proactive about making bicycle and pedestrian safety a priority for its citizens. The city has plans to improve traffic for bicyclists and provide education and bike share programs. In terms of infrastructure, the city has started to resurface 20 miles of streets to include bike lanes, and aims for 696 miles of new bikeways. One of the pilot projects includes a green, painted bike lane with sharrows, to raise awareness between cyclists and motorists.

# bridge the past + the future

New developments that visually and physically connect with adjacent buildings as well as neighboring districts successfully bridge the past and the future. Existing iconic buildings and districts exhibiting unique urban character should be preserved and celebrated for their historical and cultural significance. The integration of new development with the architectural and cultural past helps residents recognize the richness of the past that contributes to the quality of the future.

**“History is one of the most remarkable things in our lives. The mere fact it occurred makes it remarkable.”**

- Anonymous

Bridging the past and the future is critical to strengthening the identity of the city. Los Angeles was established by a grant from the King of Spain as a pueblo in 1781 and incorporated as a city in 1850. More than 200 years later, several of the original buildings and many historical neighborhoods still exist in some form, most retaining significant amounts of their original character.

Today, the original pueblo settlement is commemorated in the historic district of Los Angeles Pueblo Plaza, adjacent to Olvera Street. Abbott Kinney’s signature Venice Canals harken back to the early 1900s, reflecting a unique vision of a developer. The neighborhoods of the city are varied with extreme differences in size, geography and demographics. They are distinct in character and range from suburban Chatsworth in the northwestern San Fernando Valley, to the port community of San Pedro in the south, historic Boyle Heights in the eastern part of the city and the college-town feel of Westwood, in West Los Angeles.

While some buildings and neighborhoods have been preserved, there is the potential to commemorate more historic events, in areas that have been largely ignored. Encouraging the refurbishment of historic areas and accommodating uses such as outdoor cafes, plazas and creative programming, creating a liveable rather than static neighborhood. Public art is a vital contributor, by documenting the neighborhood’s history, explaining changes to an area or signifying the importance of a site. In addition, special signage and plaques describe the history of an area, even if an original building or street is no longer there. Building facades can highlight a variety of styles representative of different time periods, if they are retained, and can serve as a tangible and visual historical timeline while enriching the urban fabric. Bridging the past and the future can occur on a variety of scales - from the preservation and restoration of one iconic building, to the recognition of a series of streets or neighborhoods. The celebration of the past and integration with the future will help Angelenos recognize their rich heritage.

## what's out there

# bridge the past + the future

▶ Bob's Big Boy Restaurant, located in Burbank, has been in operation since 1949. Since then, the restaurant has turned into both a cultural and architectural institution. It is the oldest Bob's in the country, and was designated as a State Point of Historical Interest in 1993. It was restored in that same year. In addition to enhancing the architectural history of the building, the restaurant has reintroduced the culture of the 1950s, with "Car Hop" service and a classic car show on Friday nights.



▶ The Los Angeles City Council adopted the ordinance creating Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZ) in 1979. HPOZ create historic districts and range from 50 to over 3,000 properties. Most of the properties are residential with some containing commercial and industrial properties as well. Not all buildings in the areas need qualify, as they are a collection of several cohesive or unique historic resources within a demarcated area. The first HPOZ is in Angelino Heights, one of the oldest neighborhoods of Los Angeles.



▶ The Century Plaza Hotel, in Century City in Los Angeles was built in 1966 and has a rich history. The guests of the hotel have included several presidents and high profile celebrities. However, the building was sold in 2008 and the new owners had plans to demolish the hotel. In 2009, the hotel was added to the National Trust for Historic Preservation list of the 11 most endangered places in America. In 2011, the owners decided to preserve and reuse the hotel instead of demolishing it.

# nurture neighborhood character

One design approach does not fit all. Los Angeles is made up of a rich fabric of distinct neighborhoods. New projects can contribute, enhance and further define the character of a neighborhood rather than simply alter it. Each potential development or improvement needs to consider the context of its neighborhood or district and work with it.

**“In the Arabic language, the word for ‘neighbourhood’ or quartier, both with purely spatial connotations is hayy, which is the exact same word for ‘alive’, while its plural ahya’a is the same word for ‘the living.’”**

-Ayssar Arida

Incremental changes of neighborhoods are to be expected and embraced. Urban environments need the flexibility to be able to change with circumstance and progress. Contributing to a distinct character sustains community by nurturing the identity of the neighborhood.

There are urban design characteristics, however, that are common to many Los Angeles neighborhoods that have seemed to linger over time. Shared features that represent a lack of physical identity (underused surface parking lots, a dearth of architectural design, landscape, signage, or public art that celebrates the history and culture of place) are opportunities for neighborhoods to nurture their neighborhood character. Thus, these are areas of opportunity to nurture neighborhood character.

Parking lots and excess roadway could be used as gathering places and public spaces during off-peak hours. Transit hubs and developments

can spur new opportunities for architecture and landscape that celebrate the uniqueness of a neighborhood. Public art may educate residents about the past and can provide a unique design element that enhances a neighborhood’s character. Street trees are a traditional element used in the urban environment that defines districts by the visual characteristics of a selected species. Street trees can be a city-wide unifying element that links neighborhoods together helping to define the city as a whole, and simultaneously acknowledge the various neighborhoods.

Understanding the history, architecture, geography, environmental scale and cultural characteristics of neighborhoods provides the basis for future development and design that is rooted in the specific culture of a community. The following are a few examples of the distinct Los Angeles neighborhoods. They include Chinatown, Venice Beach, Koreatown, Van Nuys and Boyle Heights, and they provide an introduction to the diversity of the city.



Image : Mark Peacock, 2011

# chinatown

Old Chinatown was originally built in 1852, populated by male Chinese workers in the laundry and produce industries. The Chinese had no control over leasing the land due to the Chinese Exclusion Act, which did not permit Chinese people to own their own businesses. In 1931, the city demolished old Chinatown and built Union Station. The new Chinatown exists directly north of downtown, between Dodger Stadium and the Los Angeles Civic Center. Opened in 1938, it was originally created by Hollywood set designers to make it appealing to tourists.



In the late 1950s, when covenants were lifted to allow Chinese to move to other areas of the city, several of the Chinese immigrants moved to different neighborhoods, mostly in the San Gabriel Valley. New, ethnic immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand started to populate new Chinatown in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 90s, new commercial centers expanded Chinatown past Broadway. Today, Chinese and other ethnic immigrants own almost all of the commercial buildings within new Chinatown.

Chinatown's urban design character is focused around the public realm, with several pedestrian friendly plazas, markets and shopping arcades. Central Plaza and West Plaza are surrounded by retail. A "Chinese" style influence including pagodas, street lamps and signage is present throughout the neighborhood. Bright colors and signs in Chinese characters also give the neighborhood a unique identity. Two gateways announce the neighborhood, one that faces Central Plaza and another on Cesar Chavez and Broadway Boulevards. Chinatown is easily

accessible by transit and is very pedestrian friendly due to limited vehicle access on certain streets. The streets of Chinatown vary, as it is bordered by several major vehicular thoroughways, but within the neighborhood, small alleys and plazas exist that are designed for the pedestrian. The two- and three-story buildings of the neighborhood are also at a pedestrian scale, making Broadway and other large streets less intimidating for the pedestrian due to the consistent street frontage and vibrant street life.



Image : Bence Zanyi, 2009

# venice beach

In 1905, the tobacco millionaire Abbot Kinney opened Venice, California to the public. He developed the city as a resort town which resembled Venice, Italy in architectural style and urban design. Kinney built a casino in 1907 followed by other amusements, hoping to make Venice the “Coney Island of the Pacific.” In 1925, the City of Los Angeles annexed Venice and started to dismantle the amusements immediately. Oil was discovered in the 1930s, and wells sprouted along some of the canals. By the 1950s and 60s, Venice became a

hotbed for new artistic talent and that still remains. During the same time period, well-known architects came to Venice to create signature single and multi-family dwellings as well as commercial buildings. Today, Venice is home to the Hare Krishna religion and displays a myriad collection of unique architecture, public art and street performers. While the city demolished several of Venice’s amusements and canals in the early 20th century, there are traces of Kinney’s original plan found in today’s neighborhood.



Ocean Front Walk is a vibrant public space that serves as a tourist destination used by pedestrians, cyclists and most famously, roller skaters. A small area of Venice’s original canals still exist and are bordered by Pacific Avenue and Venice Boulevard. Alleys leading off of the main streets into residential neighborhoods are a lush, hidden treasure. The hybrid of architecture that exists in Venice ranges from the design of Marsh and Russell, to the work of Frank Gehry. Abbott Kinney Boulevard, the primary retail street, is a walkable, commercial corridor with

palm trees, consistent street frontage, and two lanes of bidirectional traffic, while larger streets such as Lincoln Boulevard and parts of Venice Boulevard have four lanes of bidirectional traffic and big box development. Overall, the urban design character of Venice makes it one of the most dense and diverse neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

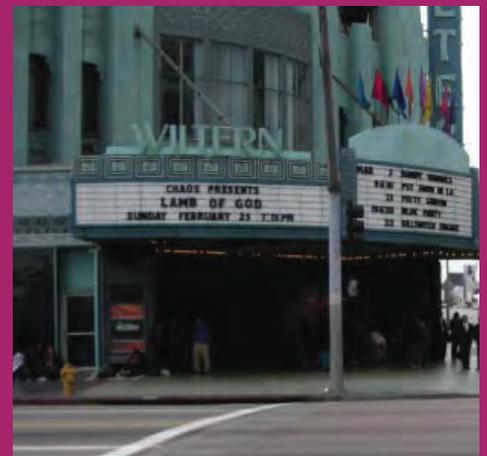


Image : Rebel Sciences "Kwasi B", 2008

# koreatown



traffic, with residential streets of two lanes of traffic with parking. The commercial buildings in the neighborhood are some of the tallest in the city, rivaling those downtown. While there are several single family homes, multi-family dwellings are common as well. The neighborhood showcases a hybrid of varying architecture; Wilshire Boulevard is well known for several Art Deco buildings and religious landmarks. New construction is common in this neighborhood, mostly as a result of transit-oriented development.



Outside of New York City, Koreatown is one of the densest areas in the country. The neighborhood is organized around an orthogonal street grid, diverting on occasion. With the advent of four Metro stations (two Purple Line and two Red Line), in addition to several bus lines, Koreatown is one of the most transit accessible neighborhoods in the city. Wilshire Boulevard and other large streets have wide sidewalks, street trees, and distinguished crosswalks making it a welcome place for pedestrians. Commercial streets are characterized by four lanes of bidirectional

Housing in the area known as Koreatown/Wilshire Western originated in the early 1900s. The auto-oriented commercial developments in the neighborhood were constructed in the 1920s along Wilshire Boulevard and other large streets such as Western and Vermont. In the 1950s, several of the high rise buildings characteristic of the financial district in this neighborhood were built. Koreans began moving to the neighborhood in the 1960s, where a sizable black and latino population existed. In 1992, the Los Angeles Riot left several of the Korean businesses destroyed, and

some of the Korean population fled to other neighborhoods. Presently, however, the population is largely Korean, with several other nationalities moving to the neighborhood due to reasonably priced housing and proximity to transportation.



Image: Candis "Bessie Smith", 2007

# van nuys

This neighborhood is named for Dutch farmer/banker Isaac Newton Van Nuys. He built the first wood frame house in the San Fernando Valley in 1872. On February 22, 1911, lot sales began in the new town of Van Nuys, California. Since the 1970's, the neighborhood has evolved into a largely Latino neighborhood reflecting the demographics of other neighborhoods in the eastern San Fernando Valley. Today, downtown Van Nuys is one of the largest centers of government outside of the Civic Center.



Van Nuys is a fairly uniform, gridded residential community. The commercial corridors vary, with Van Nuys Boulevard populated with automotive businesses in some areas and small scale retail districts with consistent street frontage in others. The civic center of Van Nuys has several public spaces and is located conveniently near the Metro Orange Line. Van Nuys is located along the Los Angeles River, and a new pedestrian and bike trail was recently created along this section of the river. Architectural character varies from Spanish Revival to

residences designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. A historic preservation overlay was recently enacted in the neighborhood, preserving bungalow style housing near Van Nuys High School. The streets of Van Nuys have large sidewalks with street trees and two lanes of bidirectional traffic in the residential areas, with street parking. The commercial streets have wide sidewalks and four lanes of bidirectional traffic. Van Nuys is home to several significant parks and landmarks including the Sepulveda Dam, the Japanese Garden and the Van Nuys Recreation Center.



image : Payton Chung, 2009

# boyle heights

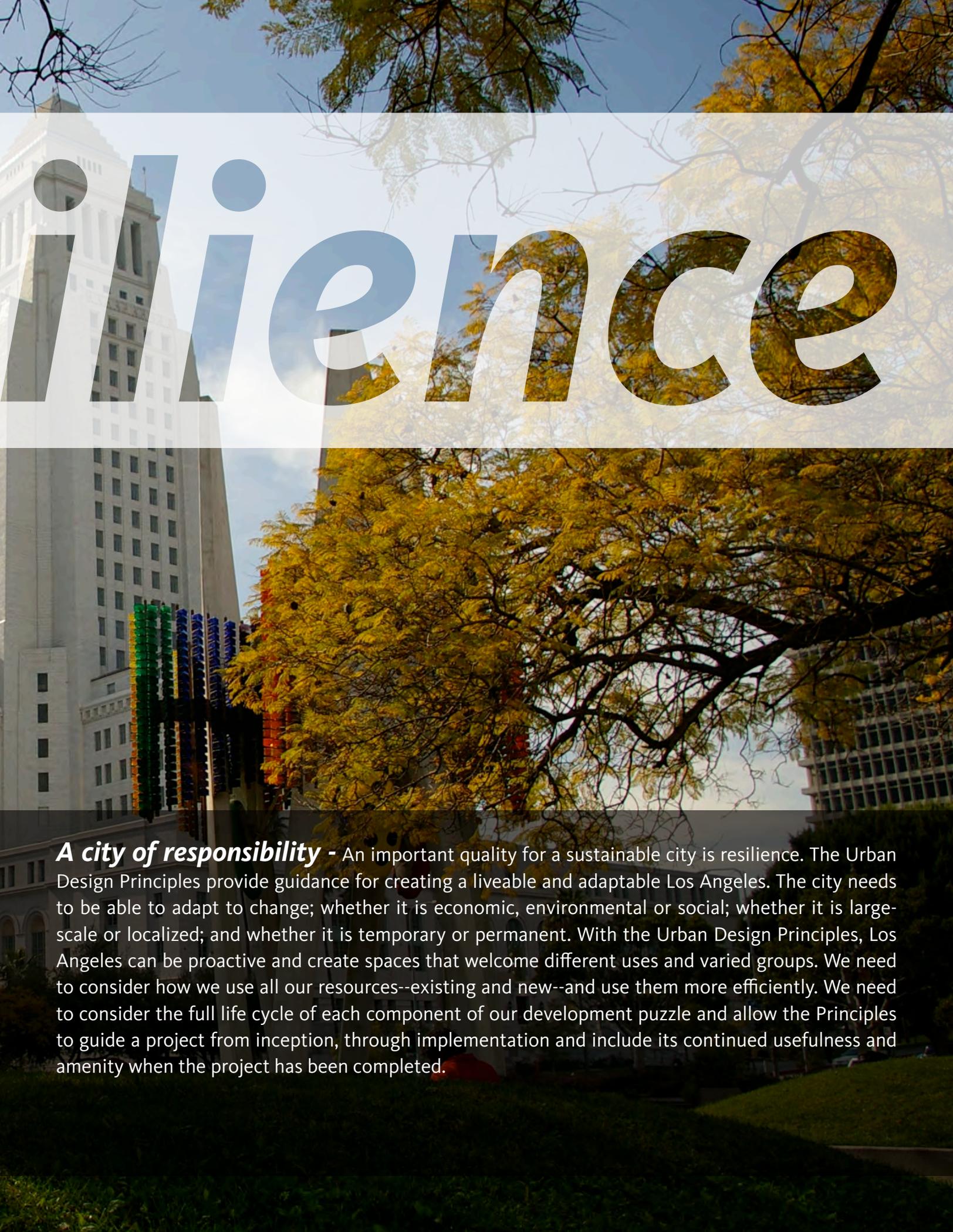
Since its origins in the 1880s, Boyle Heights has been known as the neighborhood of immigrants. In its early years, residents were primarily Jewish and Japanese, with Russian and Yugoslav residents as well. During WW II, many Japanese-Americans were sent to relocation camps and non-Latinos started to migrate to western neighborhoods. The current population is largely Latino, which can be observed in the subject matter of many local murals and the Mariachi Plaza.



Boyle Heights is centered around Hollenbeck Park and its lake. In the 1950s, when the Los Angeles freeways were being built, the Golden State Freeway was placed adjacent to Hollenbeck Park, changing the once peaceful urban refuge. Characteristic of Boyle Heights are the murals on several streets including First Street, Soto Street and Atlantic Boulevard, to name a few. Most of the buildings in this neighborhood are one story single family dwellings and two or three story apartment buildings. Architectural character of neighborhood housing varies

from Queen Ann, to Mission Revival, to Bungalow style. Several of the buildings have sizable front yards, most of which are maintained and gated. Residential streets are two-lane, bidirectional with parking on both sides and sizable sidewalks. Commercial streets have similar structure, with two additional bi-directional traffic lanes. While there are some areas of consistent street frontage, surface parking lots and large setbacks are also common. Steps have been take to preserve historic Jewish sites in the neighborhood.

# FINES



# Resilience

***A city of responsibility*** - An important quality for a sustainable city is resilience. The Urban Design Principles provide guidance for creating a liveable and adaptable Los Angeles. The city needs to be able to adapt to change; whether it is economic, environmental or social; whether it is large-scale or localized; and whether it is temporary or permanent. With the Urban Design Principles, Los Angeles can be proactive and create spaces that welcome different uses and varied groups. We need to consider how we use all our resources--existing and new--and use them more efficiently. We need to consider the full life cycle of each component of our development puzzle and allow the Principles to guide a project from inception, through implementation and include its continued usefulness and amenity when the project has been completed.

## 8

# stimulate sustainability + innovation

The quick adaptation of the City of Los Angeles to change is vital for its environmental and economic future. Create development and improvements that incorporate innovative practices to achieve a broad vision of a sustainable Los Angeles. Consideration of the full project life-cycle - the extent of costs both social and environmental as well as financial is fundamental to the Urban Design Principles. Best practices of other communities, technological advancements and the use of local materials and resources inform the design and implementation of projects.

**“The good building is not one that hurts the landscape, but one which makes the landscape more beautiful than it was before the building was built.”**

- Frank Lloyd Wright

The key to the ongoing habitability and quality of life in the City of Los Angeles is adaptation. The ability to embrace development and improvements that embody sustainable practices and technological innovation. Climate change creates an imperative to decrease our carbon footprint by providing innovative solutions to transportation and energy use. Los Angeles is abundant in sunshine, wind, cool night air, low humidity and low rainfall. It is a climate uniquely suited for alternative energy sources.

Capitalizing on advancements in stormwater management, car alternative transportation, automobile innovations, energy alternatives and environmentally responsible building design as well as providing incentives to developers and property owners, encourages a more responsible use of our natural resources and provides for the long term viability of the

city. Sustainable innovations, highlighted as part of a new “eco-aesthetic”, help to expand the visual experience for city residents and visitors and highlight their importance to the community.

There are a variety of physical measures that reduce dependence on fossil fuels, reduce heat island effect, and protect water quality. Solar energy, pavement permeability, solid waste reduction, stormwater runoff, water infiltration and recycled and local materials are some of the many strategies available. Protecting the water supply and responsibly considering water consumption in the Los Angeles Basin requires reducing water use. A decreased carbon footprint and responsible stewardship of our natural resources translates to a more viable and more beautiful city.

what's out there

# stimulate sustainability + innovation



▲ The Central Avenue Constituent Services Center, located on Central and East 43rd Street, is an innovative one acre complex. The building has a plaza on the roof, rain water harvesting, solar panels that move with the sun and an irrigation system that is powered by rainwater. The building is part of a mixed use development that includes a supermarket as well as housing.



◀ Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative, LANI, in partnership with the CRA/LA transformed vacant lots surrounding commercial businesses and created innovative Transit Art Parks on Lankershim and Magnolia Boulevards. The parks include landscaping, information kiosks, bus shelters and several other amenities, resulting in reductions in heat gain and decreased stormwater runoff.



◀ City Farm, located in Chicago, IL, was created when the Fourth Presbyterian Church transformed an abandoned basketball court in the transitional Cabrini Green neighborhood. The farm supplies local restaurants and operates an on-site market stand. The City Farm serves as a model for educating the neighborhood about sustainable, local produce. The farm also serves as a model for job creation, as they hire full-time staff and seasonal farmers.

▲ Built in 2003, the parking lot attached to the historic Helms Bakery Building incorporates power generating solar panels. It provides shade for all cars and power for electric cars with charging stations and dedicated spaces for said cars. The project was completed in partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.



# 9

## improve equity + opportunity

Economic and social sustainability is a requirement for continuing viability and growth in Los Angeles. A broader choice of housing and a variety of local economic, social and recreational activities creates diversified and healthy neighborhoods. Opportunity for all residents to live, work, and move between neighborhoods contributes to a prosperous and healthy urban environment.

**“No urban area will prosper unless it attracts those who can choose to live wherever they wish.”**

- Jonathan Barnett

Cities have a history of segregating residential and economic opportunities based on different housing types. As we move into the 21st century, a more enlightened form of city planning has emerged, encouraging integrated housing types and inclusionary zoning incentives. The variety of functions within a development or space encourages a mix of users.

Retail and business uses for a variety of income levels support a heterogeneous population. This plurality can further be extended by increased open space and recreational facilities with activities for a variety of cultures and age groups. Our streets and public spaces are opportunities to create open spaces accessible and attractive to all, regardless of demographics, social, physical or economic status.

Well designed development provides opportunities for improving the quality of life for the disenfranchised. This includes provisions for the physically disabled and facilitating economic opportunity through equitable access to public transportation. Small businesses contribute to the urban environment by being empowered to take advantage of facade improvement and streetscape changes to make their businesses friendly and approachable.

A diversity of accessible housing, retail, work opportunity and a variety of uses provides residents and visitors with a range of experiences and choices.

what's out there

# improve equity + opportunity



◀ Located on Ivar and Selma Avenue in Hollywood, this farmers market is open every Sunday and provides booths for local non-profit as well. It increases the quality and accessibility of fresh produce and provides opportunities for community gathering and economic opportunities for small farmers. Operated by Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles, a non-profit that promotes sustainability for farmers and communities, they also have farmers markets throughout the city in Crenshaw, Watts and Echo Park to name a few.

▶ Developed by GLEH, with support from Alliance for Diverse Aging Community Services as part of a \$90,000 grant received from the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, the first affordable housing of its kind opened in 2005. Located in Hollywood, the building has 104 units for lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) seniors who are 62 and older. According to the GLEH website, "34% of the units are designated for seniors with HIV/AIDS, homeless or at risk for homelessness."



▶ A new residential development in Boyle Heights, Pueblo Del Sol, is a mixed use development with 470 mixed-income residences as well as educational, recreational and community supported facilities. The development was a partnership between the Housing Authority of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District and other private developers.



▶ CRA/LA offers several grants and loans for businesses including commercial facade improvement programs. The program allows property owners and long-term tenants to improve commercial properties that are in disrepair. Renovated buildings include improvements such as replacement, restoration and rehabilitation of existing storefronts.



# emphasize early integration, simple processes + maintainable long term solutions

The Urban Design Principles are a basis for projects from inception. Solutions responding to the Urban Design Principles are successful when incorporated early into a process and simplified to aid implementation. Consideration of how the project will be maintained and cared for is a component of successful design and part of the review process. The integration of the Principles into the regulatory process forms the basis for achieving the shared vision of urban design by city staff, stakeholders, developers and designers.

**“You can’t make people creative by telling them, “Be creative.” It has to be economically sound for them to be creative, and feasible both for the area itself and for what they can do.”**

-Jane Jacobs

Implementation is just one step in contributing to the evolution of our city. A sustainable Los Angeles needs stakeholders to view development from the bigger picture of systems thinking. Early ideas and basic concepts affect later stages (e.g. financing affects the construction schedule, or designing to take advantage of existing public transit affects how the space is used later).

Simple yet effective solutions to design challenges require fewer resources, have less impact on the environment and require less maintenance. The most difficult, most intense thinking should occur at the beginning when a project’s intentions are examined for how they can be expressed through the Urban Design Principles. The resulting concept will benefit from an easier journey through the rest of the process.

City approval processes recognize and guide projects regulated by the Principles and result in a clearer understanding by everyone of the city’s goals.

Thoughtful design that is well-executed, can have a long shelf life if it is adaptable, includes maintenance systems and connections to stakeholders that are sustainable. Low maintenance means both lower operational costs and reduces the burden not only on the community but also on the environment.





Image : chicfind, 2011

# resources

**about planning:** [www.aboutplanning.org](http://www.aboutplanning.org)

**american planning association:** [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

**better environmentally sound transportation:** [www.best.bc.ca](http://www.best.bc.ca)

**cis street furniture:** [www.cis-streetfurniture.co.uk](http://www.cis-streetfurniture.co.uk)

**city comforts:** [www.citycomforts.com](http://www.citycomforts.com)

**curbed:** [www.la.curbed.com](http://www.la.curbed.com)

**City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning Urban Design Studio:** [www.urbandesignla.com/](http://www.urbandesignla.com/)

**ecosustainable hub:** [www.ecosustainability.com.au](http://www.ecosustainability.com.au)

**edinburgh standards for urban design:** [http://download.edinburgh.gov.uk/urban/urban\\_design\\_standards.pdf](http://download.edinburgh.gov.uk/urban/urban_design_standards.pdf)

**environmental street furniture:** [www.streetfurniture-uk.com](http://www.streetfurniture-uk.com)

**great streets:** [www.greatstreets.org](http://www.greatstreets.org)

**greenopia:** [www.greenopia.com](http://www.greenopia.com)

**institute on race and poverty:** [www.irpumn.org](http://www.irpumn.org)

**laist:** [www.laist.com](http://www.laist.com)

**national center for bicycling and walking:** [www.bikewalk.org](http://www.bikewalk.org)

**pattern language:** [www.patternlanguage.com](http://www.patternlanguage.com)

**pedestrian and bicycle information center:** [www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org)

**pedestrian and bicycle information center image library:** [www.pedbikeimages.org](http://www.pedbikeimages.org)

**planners network:** [www.plannersnetwork.org/](http://www.plannersnetwork.org/)

**planning and development network:** [www.planetizen.com](http://www.planetizen.com)

**project for public spaces:** [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

**scenic america:** [www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)

**street furniture, nz:** [www.streetfurniture.co.nz](http://www.streetfurniture.co.nz)

**this place is...:** [www.thisplaceis.com](http://www.thisplaceis.com)

**tree hugger:** <http://www.treehugger.com>

**univeristy of miami:** <http://scholar.library.miami.edu/miamidigital/index.html>

**university of calgary:** [www.ucalgary.ca/oncampus/weekly/jan14-05/nudge.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/oncampus/weekly/jan14-05/nudge.html)

**urban advantage:** [www.urban-advantage.com](http://www.urban-advantage.com)

**urbandesign.org:** [urbandesign.org](http://urbandesign.org)

**urban design group:** [www.udg.org.uk](http://www.udg.org.uk)

**urban land institute:** [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)

**urban photo:** [www.urbanphoto.net](http://www.urbanphoto.net)

**urban re:vision:** [www.urbanrevision.com](http://www.urbanrevision.com)

**us green building council:** [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

**worldchanging:** [www.worldchanging.com/cities](http://www.worldchanging.com/cities)



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