Block by Block: A Human Scale Approach to Redevelopment

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October 31, 2009
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Re-Engineering the Streets of Los Angeles

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City of Los Angeles Planning Department, Urban Design Studio

Simon Pastucha, Principal Urban Designer
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"A street is a room by agreement."

Louis Kahn
"If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be,…then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and had an immense impact on the rest." -- Allan Jacobs
The Garden in the Machine
Design Guide Gets Warm Reception

Developers, Architects Give Positive Feedback on New Standards

by Anne Bell

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DOWNTOWN LA -- Approximately 70 developers, architects and other professionals came to hear the official launch of the Design Guide for Downtown Los Angeles. Although few people are building now, the hope is that it will become a blueprint for the future.

Nationally, the Design Guide and Urban Design Standards Guidelines, approved by the city Planning Department, are intended to create a more pedestrian and environmentally friendly streetscape in Downtown. The guidelines include innovations that would create wider sidewalks with more trees, green streets and streetscapes, and call for activating ground-floor space to encourage walkability.

Yardi Island developer Eric Chang discussed how his company high-rise South Park -- a project located in what sidewalks are the new norm, planters and benches -- strongly inspired the new standards. "The beauty of it is, if the architects during the project, to look at the engineering and solving from the human financial office.

Several attendees said the new standards would make it easier to comply with the city's Green Building Ordinance, which was adopted last year and established stricter environmental standards for new construction.

"These are tools that will help with the green building ordinance and still provide flexibility for the architects," said Joe Cadinella of the Building Industry Association. "There's a lot of materials in this guide, but it provides some great resources for sustainability and meeting those requirements."

Developer Jonathan Jonne, former of the Los Gatos, which created Downtown's Flower Street Lofts, also praised the urban design standards for creating "an environment, instead of an environment."

"It's fun to see a process that when it started was as visionary yet to implementation," he said. "More often, these things just end up sitting in great documents."

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What we stopped
What we promoted

Temporary Complete Street: 2006

11th and Grand: 2008
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THE VISION: A Sustainable Downtown

Objectives

- Reduce carbon footprint
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Sustainability
- Green building
- Complete center
- Complete streets

DOWNTOWN PROJECT AREA & DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOODS

Rail Station ½ mile TOD
How Do Streets Contribute to a Sustainable Downtown?
How Do Streets Contribute to a Sustainable Downtown?
How Do Streets Contribute to a Sustainable Downtown?
Former Street Standards = Incomplete Streets

Current single-purpose street classification system is not working...

because....
Existing downtowns are not clean slates

- Improvements are not feasible for many older buildings.
- Incremental improvements for new construction may not result in more capacity.
- If roadways are widened adjacent to existing buildings, sidewalks may be too narrow.
Downtown Traffic is Declining

Decrease in vehicle passengers:
- 927,932 (1990)
-12%

Increase in transit riders:
- 294,357 (1987)
- 23.5%
- 337,318 (2002)
- 29.2%
- +13%

(source: LADOT 2002 Cordon Count Report, page 32)
CREATING THE TEAM

Asked a simple question.....Who is in charge of the zone of influence in downtown Los Angeles?

Community Redevelopment Agency  City Planning
Department of Transportation  Urban Design Studio
City Engineering
USEABLE TOOLS

All products on NavigateLA and this creates access for all users.
New Street Cross Section Appears
Access to Circulation Map, Downtown Design Guide and Background Report
Circulation Map

Building Livable Communities with Transit
New Striping Plans for transportation engineer
New Striping Plans
WHAT DID WE DO?

Initial standards focused on new housing and its relationship to the street.

We realized we couldn’t prepare Development Standards without
1) preparing Street Standards at the same time and
2) looking at all development types & how they related to the street
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### Tasks

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Street Standards</th>
<th>Development Standards</th>
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<td>Understand what’s there</td>
<td>Survey every block Historic resources</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Traffic volumes, transit</td>
<td>Uses, ground floor, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommend</td>
<td>Roadway width</td>
<td>Sidewalk treatment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sidewalk width</td>
<td>Ground floor treatment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bicycle lanes</td>
<td>Street wall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Review projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate impacts factors</td>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Other environmental factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt</td>
<td>Standard Plans</td>
<td>Design Guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understand What’s There: Walk the Streets
Document Findings

[Map showing street classifications with different colors for major and secondary classes.]

Existing Street Classifications
- Major Class
- Secondary
Document Findings

Secondary Standard

Typical Existing Condition

SURVEY
Document Findings - All North-South Streets Shown
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Block By Block

Spring Main

Spring

3rd St.

4th St.

5th St.

Main

Existing standards: 90’

Existing conditions: 90’

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS
By Street Segment / District

EXISTING STANDARD

MAIN STREET north of 9th Street
EXISTING STANDARD

EXISTING CONDITIONS BY SEGMENT/DISTRICT

2nd - 5th
ROW constrained to 40' half section < 50% of segment

5th - 9th
ROW constrained to 40' half section > 50% of segment

By Street Segment / District

EXISTING STANDARD

MAIN STREET north of 9th Street
EXISTING STANDARD

EXISTING CONDITIONS BY SEGMENT/DISTRICT

2nd - 5th
ROW constrained to 40' half section < 50% of segment

5th - 9th
ROW constrained to 40' half section > 50% of segment
Criteria/Goals

- Traffic volumes & required lanes
  - 700 vph/lane – 2-way with left turn pockets
  - 750 vph/lane – 2-way with center turn lane
  - 800 vph/lane – 1-way street
- Lane widths
  - <35 mph: Curb 12’, Traffic 10’
  - >35 mph: Curb 13’, Traffic 11’
  - (E) Minimums: Curb 10’, Traffic 9-10’
- Sidewalk widths
  - 15 – 24’ depending on pedestrian activity, transit, ground floor uses
  - Except: Historic District – maintain historic street wall
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By Street Segment / District

RECOMMENDATIONS/NEW STREET STANDARDS
New Street Cross Section in NavigateLA

FIGUEROA STREET - Modified 1-Way Major Class II
Looking North
101 Fwy. – Olympic Blvd. except Wilshire – 7th & at the Pantry

LEGEND - All Cross Sections
- Minimum width of sidewalk dedication
- Maximum width of roadway dedication
- Width of required sidewalk easement
  - av. = average easement, which may range from 0’ to 3 times the average, provided that the total area of the easement divided by the linear footage of the property equals the required average easement

New Striping Plans for transportation engineer
Bicycle Lanes

RECOMMENDATIONS/NEW STREET STANDARDS
Curb Extensions

RECOMMENDATIONS/NEW STREET STANDARDS
Sidewalk Widths

Before/After

Before/After
Sidewalk Widths

- ROW + average easement
- Minimum in ROW
- Additional as average easement
Sidewalk Widths

- By street
- By district

RECOMMENDATIONS/NEW STREET STANDARDS

Average (Minimum) Sidewalk Width:
- 24' (18')
- 20' (15')
- 16' (12')
- 15' (12')
- 12' (12')

* Exception:
If at least 50% of the block face consists of designated Historic Resources or buildings determined by the Chief Executive Officer to be likely to remain for at least 30 years, the sidewalk width shall match that adjacent to the fixed buildings.
Once the curb location was defined, we could complete standards for private development along each street.
Development Standards for Street & Street Wall Vary By

- Street
- District
- Ground floor use
Parkway Treatment

Parkway Zone:

Retail w/ curbside parking: paved with big tree wells
Residential or no curbside parking: landscaped
Street Trees

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The Right Street Conditions for Trees
Bus Stop Improvements
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Building/Street Interface

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

LIVABLE, WALKABLE STREETS

Activate the Ground Floor Street Wall

Downtown Los Angeles Design Guide

Retail

Live Work/Office
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Building/Street Interface

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

**LIVABLE, WALKABLE STREETS**

Activate the Ground Floor Street Wall

Residential Units with Individual Entries

Residential Common Rooms, Parking or Blank Walls
Retail/Live-Work Streets

- Retail at the Corners
- Live-work or office mid-block
### Street Wall Treatment By District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT / NEIGHBORHOOD</th>
<th>RETAIL STREETS</th>
<th>OTHER STREETS</th>
<th>MINIMUM STREET WALL HEIGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Center</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Center South</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75’ (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Downtown</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>75’ (6) ^4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Tokyo</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>35’ (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunker Hill</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35’ (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Core</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75’ (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Park north of Pico Blvd.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>45’ (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Park south of Pico Blvd.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>35’ (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Markets</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>25’ (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^1 Minimum percent of project frontage to be lined with building street wall at back of setback
^2 Minimum street wall height

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**Financial Core**: Minimum 6-story street wall.
**South Park**: Minimum 4-story street wall.
**City Markets**: Minimum 2-story street wall.
On-Site Parking

• No visible parking
• Alley access preferred
• If street access:
  - East-west street
  - Mid-block
  - Minimize curb cut width
Open Space

- Preferred location
  - Ground level
  - Open to public

- Key elements
  - Usable
  - Sustainable
  - Shade trees

Reduced on-site open space if provided as above
Open Space - Midblock Paseos
Foundation for Place-making

Legend
- Places - see list
- Active Streets

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
RESULTING STREET EXPERIENCE
Building Livable Communities with Transit

RESULTING STREET EXPERIENCE
RESULTING STREET EXPERIENCE
Tad Savinar
Urban Design Consultant, TriMet
Portland, OR
WE’RE BUILDING A GREAT DOWNTOWN

BBB Implementation Program
The Portland Transit Mall Revitalization Project
The Block By Block Project (BBB) broke up a 7.2 mile urban LRT alignment down into 1,872 twenty foot redevelopment strategies.
$1.5 million in public grants leveraged $9 million of private investment

Every $1 of public funds leveraged $5 to $30 of private sector investment
(during 24 months of a recession)
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PSU District

Union Station District
1840s
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1970s
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- CLACKAMAS
- VANCOUVER
- WASHINGTON SQUARE
- LLOYD CENTER
- HILLSBORO
- LAKE OSWEGO

[Image of family]
Building Livable Communities with Transit
Building Livable Communities with Transit
Building Livable Communities with Transit

Legend:
- Red depicts Tram Stations
- Pink depicts Parks & Open Space
- Blue indicates Strong Current Pedestrian Circulation
- Red signifies New Projects Most Likely to Influence Circulation Trends Within 10 Years
- Yellow denotes Development Projects Year 2013 and Beyond
- Purple highlights Anticipated Increased Pedestrian Circulation
- Orange marks Linkages to Network
- Green represents Festival Streets
- Black signifies BBG Priority Block

Trend: Map depicting pedestrian circulation, present & anticipated future.
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Building Livable Communities with Transit
Building Livable Communities with Transit

Legend:
- Red: Trimet Station
- Green: Parks & Open Space
- Purple: Cultural Destination
- Orange: Hotel
- Gray: Retail Destination

Trended map: pedestrian circulation between major hotels to retail & culture.
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[Map of cultural regions]
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tad pads

soften scale

visible signage

storefront improvements

sidewalk cafes

transit stop leaning rail

vendor carts

architectural lighting

sidewalk retail
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1976

2009
STANDARD STOREFRONT PROGRAM

Primarily dependent on property owners to initiate
Some funding restrictions

BLOCK BY BLOCK (BBB) STOREFRONT PROGRAM

Targeting of Parcels
Urban Design-Driven Improvements
Proactive Hiring of Architects
Hands-On Design Review Assistance
Some Additional Funding Categories
SCOPE OF PROJECT
117 Blockfaces
31 blocks improved within the TriMet construction budget
19 too good or too bad
67 parcels to work on

SUMMARY OF WORK
40 projects to be completed
34 conceptual architectural and design contracts
Over 160 face-to-face meetings with property owners
$9 million dollars of private investment leveraged by $1.5 million in grants
Improving Existing Storefronts
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$315,000 private investment
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Building Livable Communities with Transit

$500,000 private investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$288,000 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$48,600 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$600,000 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$40,969 Private Investment
$191,000 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$250,000 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$182,000 Private Investment
Creating New Commercial Opportunities
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$75,000 Private Investment
$241,278 Private Investment
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$1M+ Private Investment
Mitigating Blank Wall Conditions
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$180,686 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$35,000 Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$80,100 Private Investment
The Ones That Got Away
Building Livable Communities with Transit

PSU UNIVERSITY CENTER BUILDING AND PARKING STRUCTURE
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$2M Private Investment
Building Livable Communities with Transit

$10,000 Private Investment
Keystones for Success

• Independent, Urban Design, Cowboy-Ombudsman Approach

• Detailed Understanding of Existing Conditions of Improvement Corridor

• Pre-Identified Quick Response Team Within City Agencies

• Architects Who "Get It"

• Region or Cultural-Specific Solutions
unplanned human ingenuity