CD 13 URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

MITCH O’FARRELL
Councilmember, 13th District
Los Angeles City Council
City of Los Angeles
1. Develop inviting and accessible transit areas.
2. Reinforce walkability, bikeability and well-being.
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.
10. Emphasize early integration, simple processes and maintainable solutions.
Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this document is to:

1. Communicate to the development community, in advance of an application being filed, the design expectations for Residential, Commercial, and Industrial projects.

2. Facilitate the fair and consistent application of design objectives.

3. Protect investment throughout CD13 by encouraging consistent high-quality development.

4. Encourage projects appropriate to the context of the City’s climate and urban environment.

5. Facilitate safe, functional, and attractive development.

6. Improve the look and feel of all our neighborhoods.

7. Foster a sense of community and pride of ownership.

Area Community Plans

The Hollywood, Silver Lake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley, Northeast Los Angeles, Westlake, and Wilshire Community Plans promote architectural and design excellence in buildings, landscape, open space, and public space.

The community plans also stipulate that preservation of the communities’ character and scale, including its traditional urban design form, shall be emphasized in consideration of future development.

To this end, the CD 13 Urban 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.

For illustrative photo examples and greater explanation of the CD 13 Urban Design Guidelines, please see the Citywide Design Guidelines: http://urbandesignla.com/

CD 13 Design Review Committees:

The Hollywood Design Review Committee and district-wide CD 13 Design Review Committee assist the staff of Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell in development project review. The committees are comprised of volunteer design professionals and experts from the district.
Commercial
Pedestrian-Oriented/Commercial & Mixed-Use Projects

Commercial land serves the shopping and service needs of residents of CD 13 and can contribute to a strong sense of neighborhood identity.

The areas of opportunity for attaining high quality design in pedestrian-oriented/commercial and mixed-use projects include:

1. Enhancing the quality of the pedestrian experience along commercial corridors.

2. Nurturing an overall active street presence.

3. Protecting and conserving the neighborhood architectural character.

4. Establishing height and massing transitions between residential and commercial uses.

5. Maintaining visual and spatial relationships with adjacent buildings.

6. Optimizing opportunities for high-quality infill development that strengthens the visual and functional quality of the commercial environment within the context of our neighborhoods, while protecting the character and enhancing the tranquility of our residential neighborhoods.
Objective 1: Does the project consider neighborhood context and linkages in building and site design?

I. Site Planning

1. Locate building frontage at front property line or minimum required setback. If additional setback is necessary or prevailing setback exists, activate the area with a courtyard or “outdoor room” with pedestrian amenities.
2. Provide direct paths of travel for pedestrian destinations in large developments.
3. Maintain existing alleys for access, and where appropriate, convert into paseos.
4. Incorporate paseos into mid-block developments.
5. Activate mid-block paseos with water features, pedestrian-level lighting, artwork, benches, special paving, and landscaping.
6. Place buildings around a central common open space. In mid- and high-rise buildings, elevated podiums between rooftops and buildings can be used as common areas.
7. Place public use areas, such as restaurant seating, along street-facing walls.
8. Place drive-thru elements away from primary site corners and adjacent primary streets.
9. Install bike racks and lockers in a safe, convenient, and well-lit location.
10. Orient the long side of large-format retail establishments parallel to the public street and provide distinct entrances if multiple tenants.

II. Entrances

1. Place entrances at grade level with an unobstructed view from the public right-of-way (ROW).
2. Ground floor retail in mixed-use projects should have at least one street-facing entrance with doors unlocked during regular business hours.
3. Ground floor commercial needs to provide clear and unobstructed windows free of reflective coatings, gates, and security grills.
4. Ensure that security grills are concealed when retracted, or use electronic security.

III. Relationship to Adjacent Buildings

1. Ensure that new buildings are compatible in scale, massing, and style with existing structures in the surrounding neighborhood.
2. Soften transitions between commercial and residential areas with respect to height, massing, light, and noise. Plant and maintain greenery between property lines.

Objective 2: Does the project employ high quality architecture with high quality materials to define the character of commercial districts?

IV. Pedestrian Scale

1. Maintain a human scale.
2. At windows and entrances, include overhead architectural features, such as awnings,
canopies, cornices or trellises that provide shade.
3. Differentiate the ground floor from upper floors. Include changes in massing and architectural relief.

V. Building Facade, Form and Materials

1. Vary and articulate the building facade to avoid large, blank walls.
2. Incorporate different textures, colors, materials, and architectural elements.
3. Select materials that convey a sense of permanence.
4. Use white or reflective paint on rooftops and light paving materials.
5. Fences should incorporate changes in materials, texture, and/or landscaping. Avoid chain link, wrought iron spears, and cyclone.
6. Utilize landscaping at the street level. Use climbing vegetation where there is limited space between the building and public ROW.

VI. Storefront Character

1. Design storefronts with a focus on window design.
2. Include a solid base with high quality materials for storefront windows.
3. Provide shade for pedestrians along the public ROW.
4. Ensure that storefronts are recessed, not flush, with the edge of the building facade.

Objective 3: Does the project augment the streetscape environment with pedestrian amenities?

VII. Sidewalks

1. Provide at least a 10-ft. sidewalk on Major and Secondary Highways, and at least a 9-ft. sidewalk on Collector and Local streets.
2. Provide planted or permeable parkways.
3. Plant street trees at the minimum spacing permitted by the Division of Urban Forestry, typically one tree for every 20 feet of street frontage.

VIII. Off-Street Parking and Driveways

1. Place on-site parking to the side or rear of buildings.
2. Minimize the number of curb cuts and utilize alleys for access and egress.
3. If surface parking is necessary, locate lots at block interior rather than corner locations.
4. If parking lot abuts sidewalk, provide visual screen or landscaped buffer.
5. When driveway must be on front facade, locate it at the edge of the parcel.
6. Ensure that street-facing driveway width is minimized to 20 feet or less.
Objective 5: Does the project include open space to create opportunities for public gathering?

IX. On-Site Landscaping, Open Space and Plazas

1. Retain mature and healthy vegetation and trees. Provide canopy trees.
2. Select drought-tolerant, native landscaping.
3. Facilitate stormwater capture, retention, and infiltration and prevent runoff.
4. Incorporate shaded open space such as plazas, courtyards, pocket parks, and terraces in large-scale commercial buildings.
5. Landscape all open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking, recreational facilities or pedestrian amenities.

Objective 6: Does the project improve the streetscape by reducing visual clutter?

X. Building Signage, Lighting, Security and Utilities

1. Install a maximum of one business identification wall sign per business on a public street frontage. (No box or pole signs.)
2. Include signage at a height and size that is visible to pedestrians.
3. Install lighting fixtures to accent and complement architectural details.
4. Utilize adequate, uniform, and glare-free lighting.
5. Place utilities in landscaped areas and out of the line-of-sight from crosswalks and sidewalks.
6. Screen views of rooftop equipment from the public ROW.
7. Screen views of trash enclosures so they are not visible to pedestrians.

Objective 7: Does the project incorporate sustainable design elements?

XI. Sustainable Design Elements

1. Ensure that the project complies with the City’s Green Building Ordinance.
2. If including a hotel component, participate in the California Green Lodging Program.
3. Consider achieving LEED certification.
4. Include electric car charging stations.
5. Consider including a green roof.
6. Install photovoltaic panels.
7. If demolishing existing structures, salvage and recycle usable materials.
Residential

Multi-family Residential & Commercial Mixed-Use Projects

Multi-family development in CD 13 varies across a wide spectrum of typologies, from low-density small subdivisions in suburban areas to high-density, mixed-use buildings in urban regional centers.

The areas of opportunity for attaining high quality design in multi-family and mixed-use projects include:

1. Maximizing sustainability in multi-family developments.

2. Establishing height and massing transitions from multi-family uses to commercial uses or less dense residential uses.

3. Considering the pedestrian as the cornerstone of design over automobile-centric design.

4. Establishing landscaping and open space as essential design concepts from the outset of a project.

5. 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.”
Objective 1: Does the project consider neighborhood context and linkages in building and site design?

I. Site Planning

1. On hillside lots, use smaller terraced retaining walls to avoid massive blank wall faces.
2. Locate building frontage at front property line or at required setback. If there is a prevailing setback or additional setback is required, activate the area with a courtyard or “outdoor room” with pedestrian amenities.
3. In small lot subdivisions, apply the existing average prevailing setback.
4. Locate a majority of code-required open space at the ground level. In mid- and high-rise buildings, podiums between buildings and rooftops can serve as common areas.
5. Provide a 50% lot coverage ratio for low-rise housing and townhomes.
6. Provide direct paths of travel for pedestrian destinations in large developments.
7. Incorporate paseos into mid-block developments with water features, pedestrian-level lighting, artwork, benches, special paving, and landscaping.
8. Install bike racks and lockers near building entrances in a safe, well-lit location.

II. Building Orientation

1. Design small lot subdivisions, low-rise townhomes, and apartment buildings to ensure that all street-fronting units have a primary entrance facing the street. For medium and high-medium density buildings without ground floor entrances for individual units, create a prominent ground or first floor entry entry, such as a highly visible lobby or atrium.
2. Locate gathering spaces such as gyms, recreation rooms, and community space at the ground level and accessible to the street.
3. Include retail or other ground-floor public use in all river-adjacent projects and projects located along commercial corridors.

III. Entrances

1. Incorporate transitions including landscaping, paving, porches, stoops and canopies at individual entrances to residences and from the sidewalk to the front door.
2. Place entrances at grade level or slightly above and with an unobstructed view from the public ROW.
3. For ground floor retail in mixed-use projects, incorporate at least one street-facing entrance with doors unlocked during regular business hours.
4. In mixed-use project, ground floor uses have clear and unobstructed windows.

IV. Relationship to Adjacent Buildings

1. Ensure that new buildings are compatible in scale, massing, and style with existing structures in the surrounding neighborhood.
2. Provide a sensitive transition between multi-family and single-family zones by maintaining a compatible height and upper floor setbacks.
3. Plant trees, shrubs, and vines to screen wall between property lines. Use decorative walls that include a change in color, material, and texture.

**Objective 2: Does the project employ distinguishable and attractive building design?**

**V. Building Facade, Form and Materials**

1. Break up the facade into distinct planes that are offset from the main building facade.
2. Design multi-family buildings to convey individual residential uses.
3. Incorporate different textures, colors, materials, and architectural elements.
4. Windows project or are inset from the exterior building wall and are oriented to the street.
5. Design all facades of the building with equal levels of detail and articulation.
6. Integrate varied roof lines and heights.
7. Include eaves, awning, canopies and other elements at windows and entrances.
8. Avoid “tacked on” balconies with limited purpose and function.
9. Select high-quality materials that convey a sense of permanence.
10. Do not include unadorned textured or smooth CMU/cinder-block walls.
11. Fences should incorporate changes in materials, texture, and/or landscaping. Avoid chain link, wrought iron spears, and cyclone.

**Objective 3: Does the project provide pedestrian connections within and around the project?**

**VI. Sidewalks**

1. Provide at least a 10-ft. sidewalk on Major and Secondary Highways and at least a 9-ft. sidewalk on Collector and Local streets.
2. Provide planted or permeable parkways.
3. Plant street trees at the minimum spacing permitted by the Division of Urban Forestry, typically one tree for every 20 feet of street frontage.

**Objective 4: Does the project minimize the appearance of driveways and parking areas?**

**VII. Off-Street Parking and Driveways**

1. Prioritize pedestrian access first and automobile access second. Orient parking and driveways to the rear or side of buildings and away from the public ROW.
2. Minimize the number of curb cuts and utilize alleys for access and egress.
3. Provide drop-off areas for large-scale residential projects to the side or rear of building.
4. When driveway must be on front facade, locate it at the edge of the parcel.
5. Ensure that street-facing driveway width is minimized to 20 feet or less.
6. Wrap parking structures with active uses such as retail spaces or housing.
7. If parking area abuts sidewalk, provide visual screen or landscaped buffer.
8. Provide paths connecting common parking areas to individual or common entries.
Objective 5: Does the project utilize open space and landscaping opportunities to their full potential?

VIII. On-Site Landscaping, Open Space and Plazas

1. Retain mature and healthy vegetation and trees. Provide canopy trees.
2. Select drought-tolerant, native landscaping.
3. Facilitate stormwater capture, retention, and infiltration and prevent runoff.
4. Incorporate shaded open space such as plazas, courtyards, pocket parks, community gardens, and terraces in large-scale commercial buildings.
5. Activate all open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking, recreational facilities, or pedestrian amenities with landscaping.
6. For buildings with six units or more, cluster code-required open space areas in a central location.

Objective 6: Does the project improve the streetscape by reducing visual clutter?

X. Building Signage, Lighting, Security and Utilities

1. Place signs so they do not dominate or obscure the architectural elements of the building design.
2. Include signage at a height and size that is visible to pedestrians.
3. Install lighting fixtures to accent and complement architectural details.
4. Utilize adequate, uniform, and glare-free lighting.
5. Place utilities in side yards or in landscaped areas and out of the line-of-sight from crosswalks and sidewalks.
6. Screen views of rooftop equipment from the public ROW.
7. Screen views of trash enclosures so they are not visible to pedestrians.

Objective 7: Does the project incorporate sustainable design elements?

XI. Sustainable Design Elements

1. Ensure that the project complies with the City’s Green Building Ordinance.
2. Consider achieving LEED certification.
3. Include electric car charging stations.
4. Use white or reflective paint on rooftops and light paving materials;
5. Consider including a green roof.
6. Install photovoltaic panels.
7. If demolishing existing structures, salvage and recycle usable materials.
Industrial

Heavy Industrial, Limited/Light Industrial, Hybrid Industrial and Commercial Manufacturing Projects

The prime areas of opportunity for attaining high quality design in industrial projects include:

1. Minimizing and screening unsightly nuisances.
2. Improving the safety of the pedestrian experience along industrial corridors.
3. Adequate and safe vehicular access and maneuverability.
4. Protecting and conserving the neighborhood architectural character.
5. Promoting connectivity between adjacent neighborhoods while maintaining visual and spatial relationships between adjacent buildings.
6. Establishing height and massing buffers between industrial and non-industrial uses.
7. Strengthening the visual and functional quality of the industrial environment.
Objective 1: Does the project consider the context of the neighborhood and/or river and compatible design of uses?

I. Site Planning

1. Locate building frontage at front property line or at required setback. If additional setback is necessary, activate the area with a courtyard or “outdoor room.”
2. Provide direct paths of travel for pedestrian destinations within large developments.
3. Maintain existing alleys for access.
4. Place buildings around a central common open space.
5. Install bike racks and lockers near building entrances. Disperse bike parking facilities throughout larger sites.
6. Provide strong safeguards to control impacts resulting from toxic substance and release of airborne particles on adjacent residential uses.

II. Building Orientation and Entrances

1. Orient buildings to maximize daylighting opportunities and harvest natural light in interior work spaces.
2. Large industrial buildings with multiple tenants should provide multiple entries at multiple street frontages.
3. Place entrances at grade level and with an unobstructed view from the public right-of-way (ROW).

III. Relationship to Adjacent Buildings

1. Ensure that new buildings are compatible in scale, massing, and style with existing structures in the surrounding neighborhood and preserve continuity with the existing building stock.
2. Create height and visual transitions between industrial districts and adjacent commercial and residential neighborhoods. Step back upper floors to match adjacent commercial and residential structures and plant trees, shrubs, and vines to screen outdoor storage and odor or noise-generating functions.

Objective 2: Does the project employ high quality architecture to define the character of industrial districts?

IV. Pedestrian Scale

1. Maintain a human scale.
2. At entrances and openings, include overhead architectural features, such as awnings, canopies, trellises, or cornices to provide shade.
3. Differentiate the ground floor from upper floors.
4. Incorporate windows on ground floors facing pedestrian paths of travel.
5. Utilize landscaping to add texture and visual interest at the street level.
V. Building Facade and Form

1. Vary and articulate the building facade to avoid large, blank walls.
2. Where the building mass cannot be broken up, articulate building walls using texture, color, material changes, shadow lines, and other facade treatments.
3. Architecturally integrate exposed industrial systems and equipment where practical.
4. Incorporate windows and doors with well-designed trims and details.
5. Design all building facades with equal levels of detail and articulation.
6. Integrate varied roof lines through sloping roofs, varied heights and stepbacks.

VI. Building Materials

1. Select materials that convey a sense of permanence.
2. Avoid highly reflective building materials and finishes.
3. Include climbing vegetation and green walls on building facades.
4. Use white or reflective paint on rooftops and light paving materials; consider including a green roof.
5. Use exterior surface materials that will reduce the incidence and appearance of graffiti.

VII. Walls and Fences

1. Break up fences and long walls by landscaping, pilasters, offsets and/or changes in material, color, or texture.
2. Design fences and walls without barbs or pickets. Avoid chain link and barbed wire.
3. For large parcels in heavy industrial areas, provide a landscaped buffer around fences and/or walls.

Objective 3: Does the project create active pedestrian and employee amenities?

VIII. Sidewalks

1. Provide at least a 10-ft. sidewalk on Major and Secondary Highways and at least a 9-ft. sidewalk on Collector and Local streets.
2. Provide planted or permeable parkways.
3. Plant street trees at the minimum spacing permitted by the Division of Urban Forestry, typically one tree for every 20 feet of street frontage.

Objective 4: Does the project facilitate safe access for loading areas while buffering pedestrians and non-industrial uses?

IX. Off-Street Parking and Driveways

1. Place on-site parking to the side or rear of buildings.
2. Minimize the number of curb cuts and utilize alleys for access and egress.
3. If surface parking is necessary, locate parking lots at block interior rather than at the block edge.
4. If parking lot abuts sidewalk, provide a visual screen or landscaped buffer.
5. When driveway must be on front facade, locate it at the edge of the parcel.
6. Minimize street-facing driveway width to 20 feet or less.

X. Loading

1. Locate loading facilities to the rear of buildings. When loading facilities must be located at the front entrance, screen docks and doors from the street.
2. Separate loading areas and larger commercial vehicles from areas used for public parking and public entrances.
3. Dedicate no more than half of the site for vehicular purposes, including parking areas, driveways, ramps, and loading areas.

Objective 5: Does the project include open space to create opportunities for pedestrian and employee amenities?

IX. On-Site Landscaping, Open Space and Plazas

1. Retain mature and healthy vegetation and trees. Provide canopy trees.
2. Select drought-tolerant, native landscaping.
3. Facilitate stormwater capture, retention, and infiltration and prevent runoff.
4. Incorporate shaded open space, such as plazas, courtyards, pocket parks, and terraces in new large-scale industrial developments and orient the spaces to the sun and views.
5. Landscape all open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking, recreational facilities or pedestrian amenities.

Objective 6: Does the project improve the streetscape experience by reducing visual clutter?

X. Building Signage, Lighting, Security and Utilities

1. Place signs so they do not dominate or obscure the architectural elements of the building.
2. Limit text on signs to convey the business name or logo.
3. Install lighting fixtures to accent and complement architectural details.
4. Utilize adequate, uniform, and glare-free lighting.
5. Place utilities out of the line-of-sight from crosswalks and sidewalks and buffer with planting materials.
6. Screen all mechanical, electrical, or communications equipment.
7. Screen views of trash enclosures so they are not visible to passersby.

* Project must comply with City’s Green Building Ordinance. Consider achieving LEED certification. Include electric car charging stations, a green roof and/or photovoltaic panels. Utilize LED lighting. If demolishing existing structures, salvage and recycle usable materials.
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