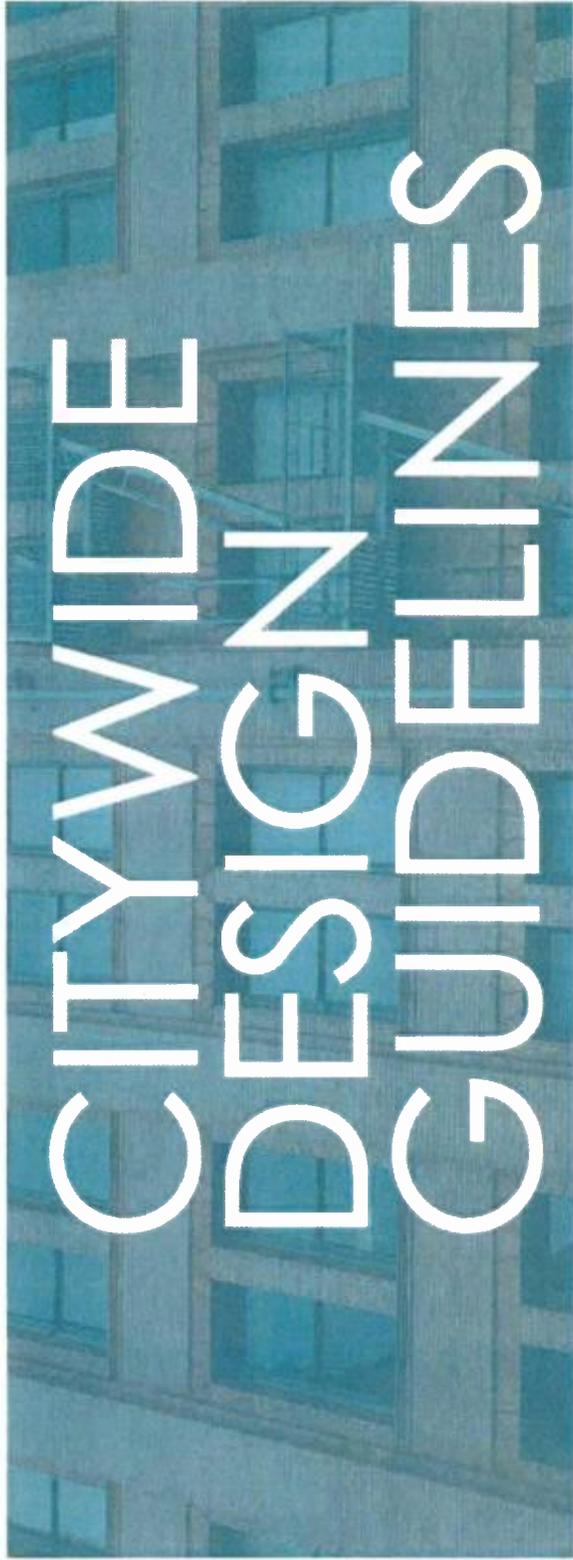


Announcing
the Los Angeles Department of City Planning's
release of the **draft update** to the



CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES



Comments on the Guidelines are due by:
Friday, May 24, 2019

if you are interested in learning more
about the Guidelines, please visit:
planning.lacity.org/urbandesign/

CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES UPDATE



BACKGROUND & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Updated March 2019

SUMMARY

The new proposed Citywide Design Guidelines aim to elevate the City's design expectations for new development. The new Guidelines represent a comprehensive update and consolidation into a single, user-friendly document of three existing Citywide Design Guidelines, which separately address residential, commercial, and industrial development. The update will enhance the development review process by organizing the Guidelines around three distinct design approaches that reflect key City policy priorities: **Pedestrian-First Design, 360 Degree Design and Climate-Adapted Design.**

BACKGROUND

On June 23, 2011 the City Planning Commission adopted the Citywide Design Guidelines, which serve to support the 10 Urban Design Principles, a part of the City of Los Angeles' General Plan Framework Element. These principles are a statement of the City's vision for the future of Los Angeles, addressing the value of walkability, neighborhood character, open space, sustainability, equity and connectivity. The Citywide Design Guidelines were established to carry out the common design objectives that maintain neighborhood form and character while promoting design excellence and innovative development solutions. The Guidelines were organized in three separate documents (residential, commercial and industrial) and covered a range of topics such as site planning and building orientation, entrances and relationship to adjacent buildings, building design and articulation, open space and landscaping, and parking and utilities. Many of the guidelines were almost identically restated in each of the three documents.

Recognizing the value of consolidating the existing Guidelines and streamlining the design review process, the Department's Urban Design Studio presented to the City Planning Commission in July 2018 an overview of its intentions to update the existing Guidelines. Since then, the Studio conducted numerous internal and external outreach meetings with multiple City Departments, planning and design professionals, and community members to elicit input on key topics for inclusion in the Guidelines and recommendations on best practices. The draft update to the Guidelines is available at: <https://planning.lacity.org/urbandesign/>. The public comment period will be open through May 24, 2019.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the Citywide Design Guidelines?

The Guidelines provide guidance as to how a project can contribute positively to the environment, experience and character of a neighborhood. The Guidelines assist the development and design team during the project concept and design development stages. Early consideration of how a project may align with the Guidelines enables a project to more successfully achieve positive design and performance outcomes.

Why are the Citywide Design Guidelines being updated?

The existing Guidelines, while very comprehensive, treat all of their design recommendations equally, where, in fact, some guidelines deserve more emphasis than others as critical to achieving the City's goals. The intent of the update is to clarify the design qualities that the City is seeking to achieve and provide greater clarity for community members and project teams as to how those design qualities can be incorporated into a project. Additionally, eliminating the separation of the guidelines by use (residential, commercial and industrial) recognizes that, increasingly, many Los Angeles projects involve a mix of uses.

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How will the new Guidelines differ from the existing Guidelines?

Like the existing Guidelines, the new Guidelines will align with the City's Urban Design Principles and General Plan. While the three existing documents each contain over 150 guidelines, the new Guidelines will be a single, more compact document of only ten guidelines, which represent higher-level priorities that elevate the City's most important design expectations. The more concise format provides much greater clarity as to how a project's site layout, building design and public right-of-way improvements can most effectively address the City's overall goals. Each of the Guidelines is then accompanied by a series of more detailed "design considerations," providing project teams and designers an array of flexible design methods for meeting the Guidelines' intent.

How will the new Guidelines be structured?

The new Guidelines are aligned and organized based on three design approaches: **Pedestrian-First Design**, **360 Degree Design** and **Climate-Adapted Design**. The three design approaches serve as a short-hand for communicating the broader intent of the General Plan, including the Framework Element and the 35 Community Plans. The design considerations under each of the Guidelines are further organized by three spatial categories – Site Planning, Building Design and Right-of-Way – to assist project teams in considering how and where a specific tactic or strategy may be best achieved.

What are the 10 Design Guidelines?

Pedestrian-First Design Guidelines

- Guideline 1: Promote a safe, comfortable and accessible pedestrian experience for all.
- Guideline 2: Carefully incorporate vehicular access such that it does not degrade the pedestrian experience.
- Guideline 3: Design projects to actively engage with streets and public space.

360 Degree Design Guidelines

- Guideline 4: Organize and shape projects to recognize and respect surrounding context.
- Guideline 5: Express a clear and coherent architectural idea in a manner that is appropriate to the site's context.
- Guideline 6: Provide amenities that support community building and provide an inviting, comfortable user experience.
- Guideline 7: Carefully arrange design elements and uses to protect site users.

Climate-Adapted Design Guidelines

- Guideline 8: Protect the site's unique natural resources and features
- Guideline 9: Configure the site layout, building massing and orientation to lower energy demand and increase the comfort and well-being of users.
- Guideline 10: Enhance green features to increase opportunities to capture stormwater and promote habitat

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What type of projects are required to respond to the Guidelines?

The Guidelines will apply to projects for which the department has design review authority, such as General Plan Amendments, Zone Changes, Site Plan Review, Density Bonus with Conditional Use, and discretionary Transit Oriented Communities applications. The Guidelines will be utilized in areas that lack more tailored, geographically specific design guidelines such as in Community Plans, Specific Plans or Historic Preservation Overlay Zones. However, all project applicants will be encouraged to review the Guidelines and consider how to incorporate their recommendations into their project design.

How will a project demonstrate compliance with the new Guidelines?

Projects that are subject to the Guidelines will need to include as part of their application a written statement that describes how their project complies with each of the ten guidelines. The project can employ any combination of the design considerations in order to address a specific guideline or can suggest using a different design solution that still meets the intent of the guideline.

Can a project deviate from the Citywide Design Guidelines?

The provisions set forth in the Guidelines identify the desired level of design quality for all developments. However, flexibility is necessary and encouraged to achieve excellence in design. Therefore, the use of the words "shall" and "must" have been purposely avoided within the specific guidelines. The purpose of the Guidelines is to underline the design qualities that the City is seeking to achieve and elevate the quality of design in the City, while fostering design innovation and creativity. Applications that do not meet specific guidelines should provide rationale for the alternative design and explain how the project will meet the intent of the General Plan, the Municipal Code, and overall intent of the specific guideline. Whether the design is justified will be determined through required "Findings" in the project's determination.

Will the Guidelines provide examples?

Visual images are an important way for the Guidelines to offer examples of the types of design solutions or strategies that a project may utilize to meet the intent of a specific guideline. For many guidelines, more detailed reference information will be provided via hyperlinks to additional resources. The photos that are currently in the draft Guidelines are placeholder images and, while all are located within the City of Los Angeles, a majority of them are located in downtown Los Angeles. In order to ensure that the final images represent all geographies and diverse settings across Los Angeles, the public review period on the Guidelines also includes an open solicitation for pertinent photos and images. Suggested photos of illustrative completed projects may be submitted at <http://bit.ly/CDGphotos>.

What is the relationship between the General Plan, the Los Angeles Municipal Code, and the Citywide Design Guidelines?

The approval process for new development is guided by the General Plan and the Los Angeles Municipal Code. The **General Plan** is the policy document that sets the development vision for the City, providing policy direction for a wide variety of development-related topics including: land use, housing, mobility, open space, health, equity, conservation, air quality and infrastructure. The **Zoning Code**, part of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, contains regulations that govern the development of a particular property. It includes "standards" that provide prescriptive requirements that may shape components of a building's site plan or architectural design. **Design Guidelines**, by contrast, provide a less prescriptive, more flexible ways of conveying design expectations and shaping proposed projects.