

# LITTLE TOKYO

Community Design Overlay (CDO) DISTRICT

リトル東京地区の都市デザイン



# Introduction

The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (CDO) creates thoughtful development guidelines that reflect the community's vision for the neighborhood. This document establishes long-term goals and creates design principles that will be used to guide future development within the CDO area.

Today, Little Tokyo remains an active commercial, residential, religious, cultural, and historical community center in Downtown Los Angeles. In addition to being the center for Japanese-American culture and community, Little Tokyo represents a unique intersection of art and history in a neighborhood connected through pedestrian-oriented streets that contribute to a distinctive identity and sense of place.

The neighborhood is part of the greater Downtown Los Angeles community, an interconnected and rapidly changing area of the city. At the heart of changes in recent years are significant mass transportation investments, redevelopment of older neighborhoods, and an influx of new residents. With the planned Regional Connector subway station coming to the neighborhood, extension of the Gold Line, and a High Speed Rail terminal planned at Union Station a few blocks away, Little

Tokyo could potentially face pressures for change in the near future.

In light of these trends, the unique character of Little Tokyo cannot be taken for granted. These significant public investments could create new development pressures for the neighborhood. However, if carefully guided, these investments represent an opportunity to preserve, enhance, and strengthen the community.

The intent of the Little Tokyo CDO is to provide guidance and direction for the design of new buildings and public spaces, to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment, enhance the physical appearance of the area, and preserve the historical and cultural identity of Little Tokyo. These guidelines are intended to help ensure that both public and private projects in the area respect the character of the neighborhood.

## LITTLE TOKYO SETTING

Little Tokyo is located in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles, just south of the city's birthplace at present-day El Pueblo De Los Angeles State Historic Park. The neighborhood is distinct among abutting areas, such as the Civic Center, Arts District, and the Historic Core; however, Little Tokyo is well connected to its neighbors by key pedestrian linkages.

## Community History

Around the turn of the 20th century, a small Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrant) community firmly established here around First and San Pedro Streets. By 1915, over 7,000 Japanese lived in the Los Angeles area, the mainland United States' largest Japanese settlement at the time. It was here that Japanese migrants and immigrants began contributing to Los Angeles' vibrant, multi-ethnic population by bringing their own unique customs and religions.



In the face of legislation such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which ended further immigration from Japan, Little Tokyo continued to develop into a thriving community. However, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and in response to growing anti-Japanese sentiment, president Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed executive order 9066 on February 19, 1942, resulting in the mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans from the west coast of the United States. Vibrant communities such as Little Tokyo became virtual ghost towns within a matter of months. Following the war, Japanese Americans, whether released from one of America's 10 concentration camps or returning as heroic veterans who fought for democracy in Europe and Asia, gradually returned to Little Tokyo to rebuild their community and restart their lives.

Following the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II, the cultural and economic stature of Little Tokyo never fully recovered to its pre-war status. The importance of Japanese to the state agriculture and produce market was significant – so much so that Little Tokyo had stretched from Temple Street to Olympic Boulevard and Los Angeles street to the Los Angeles river. The loss of this economic center was detrimental to the Little Tokyo community.

In the mid-1950s, community leaders began discussing plans to revitalize Little Tokyo. By 1962, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association was formed as a non-profit organization by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California with membership made up of both Issei and Nisei (American-born second generation). Los Angeles City Planners met with members of the community, as well as with businesses, property owners and non-profit organizations, in order to support the vision toward revitalization. These discussions led to the identification of a nine-block area designated for redevelopment. A plan was presented to the city, and in 1970, the City Council approved the proposal and created the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Area as a separate district for 30 years. In 2000, a 10-year extension was added. Several one-year extensions were added to the plan, increasing its life to February 2014.

Today, Little Tokyo is just one of the three remaining Japantowns in California (including San Francisco's Nihonmachi and San Jose's Japantown). The north side of First Street, from Central Avenue to Judge John Aiso Street, was declared the Little Tokyo Historic District by the Department Of The Interior.

## Cultural & Economic Characteristics

Today, Little Tokyo remains an active commercial, residential, religious, cultural, and historical community center in Downtown Los Angeles. In addition to being the center for Japanese American culture and community, Little Tokyo offers a unique intersection of art and history on pedestrian-oriented streets that contribute to Little Tokyo's distinctive identity and sense of place.

The neighborhood houses both the Japanese American National Museum and the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, two prominent cultural institutions that attract visitors from around the region. In addition, the greater Little Tokyo neighborhood is home to a range of cultural and religious institutions: Japanese American Cultural & Community Center; Centenary United Methodist Church; Higashi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple; Jodoshu Buddhist Temple; Koyasan Buddhist Temple; Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple; Maryknoll school and church; Union Church of Los Angeles; Zenshuji Soto Mission.

The Japanese Village Plaza (JVP) is part of the primary pedestrian thoroughfare, known as the 'spine', which connects the major community and cultural institutions in Little Tokyo. Beginning at the Go For Broke Monument, at the northern end of Central Avenue (JANM and MOCA), the thoroughfare cuts through the JVP, transitions into Frances Hashimoto Plaza and ends at the JACCC Plaza. The JACCC Plaza was designed by internationally renowned architect and designer Isamu Noguchi and is surrounded by the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (and Japanese Garden) and Japan America Theater. When completed, MTA's Regional Connector Little Tokyo/Arts District station will become the nexus between the community and the region's light rail transportation system.



## LAND USE & BUILT FORM

Little Tokyo contains a range of significant Japanese religious and cultural institutions and consists of a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. It has a varied development pattern that ranges from the predominantly small scale historic buildings on the north side of East First Street, to larger scale development, such as the 13-story Little Tokyo Towers residential project on third street and low- to mid-rise industrial and warehouse buildings along the south side of Third Street.

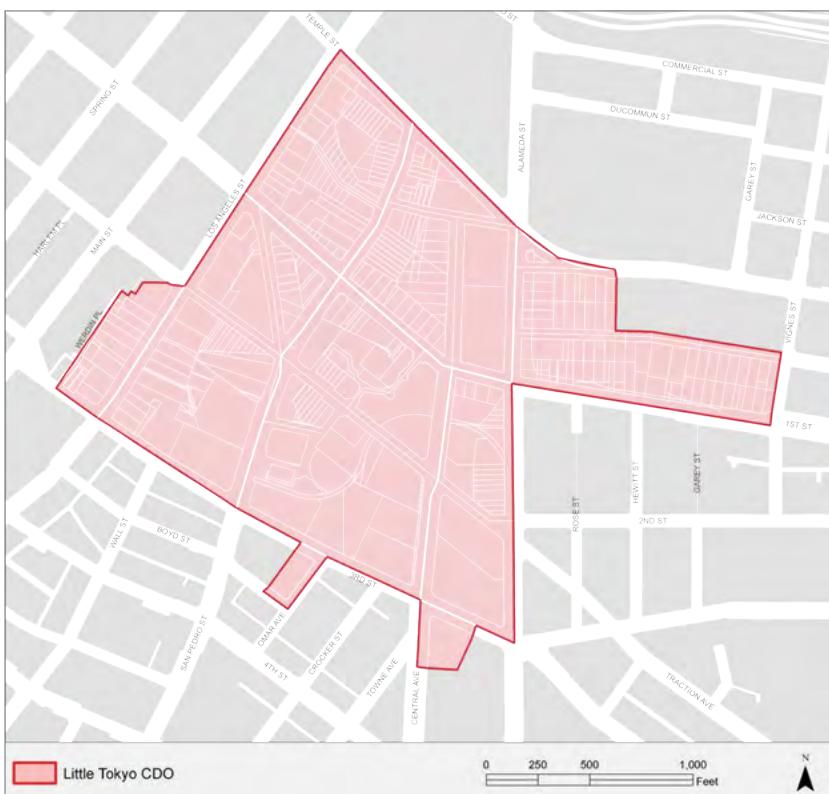
The streets of Little Tokyo are pedestrian-oriented and lined with vibrant neighborhood serving uses, such as small scale retail shops, restaurants, and cafes. The neighborhood also boasts two prominent pedestrian paseos: Astronaut Ellison S. Onizuka street and the Japanese Village Plaza. The pedestrian friendly neighborhood is served by a light rail Gold Line station along the eastern edge of the CDO area, which will become the site of the Regional Connector station.

## PLANNING PROCESS

During 2009 and 2010, a working group of Little Tokyo stakeholders helped develop these guidelines as a way for the Department of City Planning to continue design review activities that had been overseen previously by the community redevelopment agency (CRA/LA) under the authority of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plan. Using the former CRA/LA Design Guidelines as the basis for this effort, the group developed this document with the goal of continuing to support the development of Little Tokyo as an active, pedestrian - oriented district with an emphasis on preserving its unique cultural identity. Through subsequent community meetings, the guidelines were reviewed and refined with input from the broader Little Tokyo community before being adopted by the City Planning Commission in 2013.

### Community Design Overlay Boundary

The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (CDO) area is generally bounded by Temple Street to the north, Alameda Street to the east, 3rd Street to the south, and Los Angeles Street to the west (see map for detailed boundaries).



## COMMUNITY DESIGN OVERLAY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Little Tokyo CDO is to ensure that development reflects the overall vision of a cohesive, pedestrian-friendly, and vibrant mixed-use district. Additionally, by encouraging a mix of retail, services, office uses, entertainment uses and housing, the CDO can help generate concentrations of pedestrian activity to support both transit and an active street environment. The CDO guidelines can ensure that new developments and storefronts invite the pedestrian, promote safe and active streets and contribute attractive public open spaces.

This can be achieved through quality design and architectural detailing; adequate ground-floor transparency; appropriate signage; increased landscape detailing (as appropriate) and the protection of historic structures.

The design and development guidelines presented are flexible in application, providing direction for design treatment without mandating one particular architectural style or form. The implementation of these guidelines ensures that each project contributes to a more functional, walkable, and appealing district. In this way, improvements to individual properties can, over time, enhance the function of Little Tokyo as a vital Downtown Los Angeles neighborhood that maintains a unique cultural identity to be shared with future generations.

The Little Tokyo CDO design and development guidelines are intended to promote and enhance the identity of the district. Specifically, the goals of the CDO are:

### *Respect for the unique cultural and historical heritage of the Little Tokyo neighborhood by:*

- Preserving and promoting Little Tokyo's history and cultural identity and character;
- Encouraging appropriate rehabilitation of structures within the National Register Historic District, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior standards, while retaining and promoting the cultural history of Little Tokyo;
- Preserving religious institutions by better connecting them to the community through compatible development and improved pedestrian linkages.

### *A vibrant community that meets the needs of all by:*

- Promoting and sustaining a thriving and active community;
- Encouraging amenities and promoting publicly accessible spaces in new development that caters to a range of age groups including youth, families, and seniors;
- Attracting people of various cultures and generations;
- Promoting land uses in Little Tokyo that will address the needs of visitors and local residents;
- Creating an urban form that fosters social relationships and a sense of community;
- Creating places for people to socialize and recreate;
- Encouraging development that contributes to the safety and comfort of Little Tokyo residents and visitors.

### *A thriving and sustainable local economy that balances residents and visitors by:*

- Encouraging mixed-income and mixed-use developments;
- Balancing regional attractions with neighborhood-serving uses and amenities;
- Fostering a 24-hour Little Tokyo, allowing for nighttime activities and safe and active public streets;
- Allowing for a variety of land uses, including residential, retail, commercial, religious, cultural, recreational, and entertainment uses;
- Encouraging the addition of more local businesses, especially that promote community culture, history, and a sustainable community economy;
- Encouraging business activity by promoting accessibility and improving circulation within the district.

### *A walkable and connected neighborhood by:*

- Providing a pedestrian-friendly environment with amenities that foster active streets and encourage social interaction;
- Preserving and enhancing the pedestrian "spine" of Little Tokyo (see map on pg 15);
- Fostering better connections with the Arts District, Historic Core, Civic Center, El Pueblo, and other neighboring communities;
- Ensuring that any potential infill projects contribute to the urban form of Little Tokyo, in particular, by reinforcing the pedestrian realm.

## DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Little Tokyo CDO is based upon the following design principles: activity, community, identity, context, compatibility, interest, and quality.

**1. Activity.** Good building and site design is integral to a thriving and animated pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district. By facilitating an active street interface in new and existing buildings, design guidelines play an essential role in encouraging pedestrian activity, invigorating commercial uses and creating a safe and pleasant environment. Inviting storefronts, paseos, arcades, plazas, sidewalk dining, and attractive pedestrian-oriented signage promote sidewalk activity.

**2. Community.** New developments should provide places for people to gather and interact and should be inclusive and cater to a variety of age groups and interests.

**3. Identity.** Design guidelines provide an opportunity to express the cultural identity of Little Tokyo in its architecture and landscaping and to preserve the community's unique history in its built environment. Maintaining this identity is essential to its unique image appeal to visitors and residents alike. Urban design elements can reflect Japanese tradition and cultural sensitivity and can be incorporated into landscaping, signage, public art and architecture.

**4. Context.** Design guidelines provide regulatory flexibility to allow project applicants to take cues

from the environment, historical precedent and physical site data of the surrounding district. Successful district projects help positively reinforce the identity of Little Tokyo by considering its context. Projects should contribute to the aesthetic and physical character of Little Tokyo. Infill developments fit into the existing context by continuing the prevailing streetwall and paying particular attention to massing and setbacks, façade articulation and site planning. Guidelines, along with discretionary review, will ensure compatibility with the designated National Register Historic District while permitting creativity for new infill development.

**5. Compatibility.** Projects should promote compatibility with its surroundings, both with respect to design and use. Additionally, when feasible and consistent with preservation goals, projects should incorporate design features that improve compatibility amongst a wide range of uses and improve transitions between uses.

**6. Interest.** Architectural and landscape detailing that can be attractive to pedestrians can help improve the appeal and identity of Little Tokyo. This detailing includes storefront ornamentation, reduction of blank walls, and the appropriate variation of scale, color and texture. Guidelines based upon this principle address wall surfaces, awnings, signage, architectural treatments, setbacks and ground floor transparency.

**7. Quality.** As new development occurs within the district, it must positively contribute to the overall visual, historic, and cultural identity of Little



Tokyo. Little Tokyo's visual appearance can be enhanced by the use of quality building materials, attention to design details, and increased landscaping and maintenance.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The Little Tokyo CDO will implement the General Plan Framework and the Central City Community Plan by helping to achieve the goals and objectives of the district, consistent with the General Plan. The Little Tokyo CDO is consistent with the historic Downtown Los Angeles Design Guidelines (2002), the recently adopted Downtown Los Angeles Design Guide, and new street standards (2009).

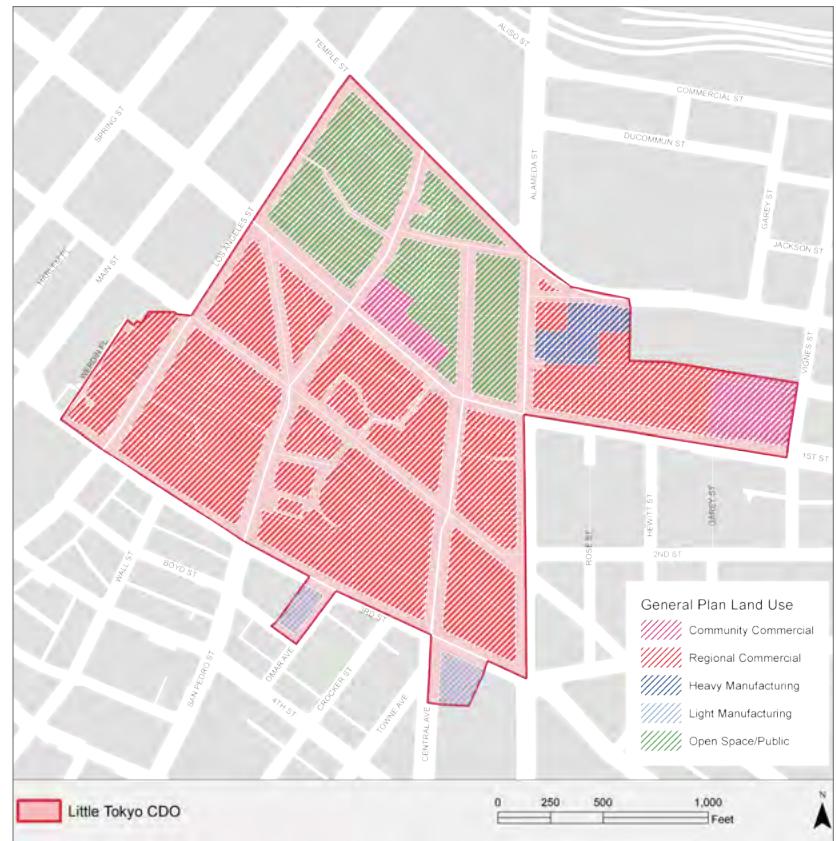
## GENERAL PLAN FRAMEWORK & CENTRAL CITY COMMUNITY PLAN

The City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework identifies focal points in each community that function as centers of activity and where new growth and development is expected to occur. The Little Tokyo CDO is designated as part of the "Downtown Center" as part of the General Plan Framework. The Downtown Center is considered an international center for finance and trade that serves the five-county metropolitan region and encourages considerable density and floor area ratios up to 13:1 (high-rise residential towers, financial institutions and corporate headquarters). It is also the primary economic, governmental and social center of Los Angeles. The intensities permitted in Little Tokyo are lower than that of other parts of Downtown, with prevailing floor area ratios of 6:1 in the blocks south of 1st street and north of 3rd Street, while the blocks on other side allow for lower intensity with a floor area ratio of 3:1.

Downtown Los Angeles is also the largest government center in the region; the Downtown Center is also the location of the region's major cultural and entertainment facilities and its principal transportation hub. As the primary center of urban activity for the Los Angeles region, the Downtown Center's development should reflect a high design standard and host a variety of uses. Additionally, Downtown's visitors and growing residential population should benefit from street activation and enhanced public safety as a result of future Down-

town development. The Central City Community Plan promotes the revitalization of Downtown districts and encourages projects that contribute to an active, 24-hour Downtown.

The goal of the Central City Community Plan is to expand and reinforce the distinct districts of Downtown and to eventually link pockets of activity via vibrant, pedestrian friendly streets. It also further refines the land use designations as part of the larger "Downtown Center". Through the Community Plan, the Little Tokyo CDO area contains a mix of land uses. The center of the CDO, south of 1st Street and north of 3rd Street are designated as Regional Commercial, the blocks north of 1st Street are a mix of Public Facilities, Open Space, and Community Commercial, while the blocks south of 3rd Street are designated with a mix of Light Manufacturing and Community Commercial.



## LITTLE TOKYO REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

### Permanent [Q] Qualified Conditions

In 2006 an ordinance instituted special use restrictions for the bulk of the Little Tokyo CDO area that limited the use of ground floor retail commercial space to those uses allowable in city-defined pedestrian oriented districts, as detailed in Section 13.07 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. With small exceptions, all of the ground floor retail use in place at the time of the ordinance complied with the list of allowable uses; however, the ordinance was enacted to curb potential uses that would conflict with the character of Little Tokyo. The [Q] conditions were to further many of the goals, such as encouraging growth of the historic retail base that supports local needs and reinforcing the distinct identity as a retail tourist area and a cultural, shopping, and service area for Southern California's Japanese American community.

The CRA had identified Little Tokyo as a redevelopment area for focused efforts to reconstruct and preserve a mixed use, full service community that will continue to serve as the cultural, religious, social and commercial center of the Japanese American Community in Southern California. Its vision was to

encourage developments that are consistent with the character of Little Tokyo, and that enhance the community's overall image. Among its several goals, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plan aimed to:

- Eliminate and prevent the spread of blight and deterioration;
- Rehabilitate and redevelop the project area;
- Promote the development of a unique commercial and cultural complex to complement Downtown and Civic Center growth;
- Facilitate residential development and the provision of housing units for families with low to moderate incomes and senior citizens;
- Eliminate certain environmental deficiencies, such as obsolete street pattern of dead-end and diagonal streets which contribute to poor traffic circulation and to odd shaped and small, shallow lot patterns which prevent proper and economical utilization of the land.

These particular goals echo the spirit and intent of the Little Tokyo CDO design and development guidelines. The CRA/LA was able to provide certain design guidance within the Little Tokyo neighborhood that the CDO replaces.

### Downtown Design Guide

The Downtown Design Guide, adopted in January 2009, provides basic guidelines for all of Downtown. The purpose of the Downtown Design Guide is to coordinate development in the core of the city, so that projects help each other succeed and result in a better, livable Downtown. The Design Guide, "design for a livable Downtown", is intended to provide guidance for creating a livable Downtown and will be jointly implemented by staff from the City Planning department, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Public Works. This CDO is intended to provide more tailored guidelines for Little Tokyo and are in addition to the guidelines contained in the Downtown Design Guide. Where they differ, the Design Guidelines in this CDO supersede. Where this document is silent, then prospective applicants should refer to the Downtown Design Guide for direction.



From 1970 through its expiration in early 2014, the majority of the area covered by the CDO was part of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Project.

## FUTURE EFFORTS

### Central City New Community Plan Program

The Central City Community Plan will be updated to refine the policy and regulatory framework that will guide future development in Downtown. It will provide a vision for the type, character and scale of development that should occur in each Downtown district with the overall objective of reinforcing the unique character of individual Downtown districts while improving their functionality as well as the linkages and connectivity among them. The Little Tokyo district is one of the Downtown districts that will be addressed in the Community Plan. The Community Plan will designate permitted land uses and implement development regulations through ordinances such as zone and height districts, parking requirements, and design standards. The Little Tokyo CDO is an implementation program of long-standing Community Plan goals and policies. The CDO will provide guidance and direction in the preservation of existing structures and the design of new buildings to enhance the appearance, retain the identity, and promote the pedestrian environment of the Little Tokyo district, while establishing a nighttime district that attracts visitors and supports a growing residential community. The new Community Plan program will reinforce the revitalization of the Little Tokyo district by strengthening these goals and policies.

### Little Tokyo Streetscape & Infrastructure Improvement Plan

Little Tokyo will undoubtedly experience changes with increased local and regional connectivity options available through the neighborhood and the development pressures those investments will likely bring. While the regulations of the Community Design Overlay apply to the private realm, the intent of this document is to facilitate an environment of friendly sidewalks and public spaces that are amenable for pedestrians and those who make use of the public spaces of the neighborhood.

The CDO supports thoughtful improvements in the public realm that enhance the regulations found in this document. Connectivity is a fundamental goal of the CDO, which would be enhanced by streetscape improvements for enhanced sidewalks, landscaping, medians, etc. In addition, the CDO supports connections to light rail stations

through improvements and wayfinding and connections to bicycle mobility through bicycle parking and on-street bike lanes.

Parklets and bike corrals are two simple and cost effective measures that have been used in other cities to provide public space and amenities while facilitating connectivity, which could further the goals of a pedestrian-friendly and active neighborhood. Both of these types of improvements would be in concert with the CDO.

[Both parklets and bike corrals use existing and often underutilized roadways and repurpose the space for bicycle parking, in the case of bike



corrals, or for public space, for parklets]. Currently the City of Los Angeles has pilot programs in place for both of these innovative treatments. While these are both relatively low cost opportunities, those costs associated with building and maintaining these projects are typically carried by a local business or business improvement district.

# Administrative Procedures

## PROJECT THRESHOLDS

General regulations pertaining to the function and administration of the Little Tokyo Design Guide will be consistent with those of the Community Design Overlay zones as outlined in Section 13.08 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC). A project within the Design Guide boundary is defined in Section 13.08 C.2 of the LAMC. Consistent with that Section, the following project definition and exemptions apply specifically to the Little Tokyo Design Guide:

## LITTLE TOKYO DESIGN GUIDE PROJECT

The following constitutes a project: the erection, construction, addition to, or exterior alteration to any building or structure within the boundary area of the Little Tokyo Design Guide including signs, canopies/awnings, façade alterations, the addition of roof equipment, and significant landscaping.

These guidelines apply to all projects located in whole or in part within the Little Tokyo boundary area regardless of the proposed or existing use (residential, commercial, industrial).

All projects within the Little Tokyo Design Guide boundary area should comply with the guidelines of this Design Guide.

*Exemption A* project does not include the following: (a) construction that consists solely of interior remodeling or interior rehabilitation or repair work and (b) alterations of, including structural repairs, or additions to any existing building or structure façade that does not front a public street, and in which the aggregate value of the work, in any one 24-month period, is less than 50 percent of the building or structure's replacement value before

The alterations or additions, as determined by the Department of Building and Safety. (The exemption does not apply if the alterations or additions are to any exterior wall fronting a public street or pedestrian walkway.)

## GENERAL PROCEDURES

All applicants proposing a project within the boundaries of the Little Tokyo Design Guide will file an application with the Department of City Planning at one of its public counters, in accordance with Section 13.08 E, after a consultation with Community Planning staff. Applicants will find more details on the project review process below. The Department of City Planning will coordinate Design Guide applications with the following City entities as a part of the project compliance review process.

## COORDINATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING OFFICE OF HISTORIC RESOURCES (OHR)

All designated Historic Cultural Monuments (HCMs) and properties listed in or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be reviewed by the Office of Historic Resources for compliance with the Secretary of Interior's standards. Design Guide project review for HCMs will be led by the Department of City Planning Neighborhood Projects with coordinated internal review and input from OHR staff on a project-by-project basis, as needed.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### Project Applications

All Little Tokyo Design Guide projects require the submittal of an application, referred to as a “Design Overlay Plan,” which includes plans and materials as defined in Section 13.08 E of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. The Director of Planning may require additional documents or materials as deemed necessary. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, projects will be reviewed by the Director of Planning for compliance with these Design Guidelines, per the procedures established in Section 13.08 of the LAMC regarding Design Overlay Plan approvals.

For projects involving historic resources, staff may require that a historic assessment or some other appropriate evaluation, as determined by staff, be conducted by an approved historic consultant. A historic assessment will be required when necessary to assist staff in evaluating a project’s impacts on historic resources. Such an assessment may also be necessary for staff to make a determination about the feasibility of repairs. The Design Guide guidelines encourage repair over replacement whenever feasible, a determination that will be made by staff, with the assistance of any necessary historic assessment.

### Procedures For Permit Clearances

#### A. Procedures for Minor Project Approvals

Notwithstanding Los Angeles Municipal Code 13.08 E, a building permit may be issued for the following minor projects, provided that the Director of Planning issues an administrative clearance certifying that the project fully complies with the District’s Design Guidelines:

1. Modifications to a building façade that do not reduce storefront transparency and that do not involve a change in the type of materials used on the façade;
  2. The installation of awnings or other non-permanent decorative features;
  3. The installation of mechanical equipment visible from the public right of way (mechanical equipment that is not visible from the public right of way is not subject to the District’s Design Guidelines).
- B. Procedures for Sign Approvals
- Notwithstanding LAMC Section 13.08 E, sign approvals are subject to the following procedures:
1. All signs shall comply with Section 14.4 Of the LAMC, except that the total sign area for all signs on a lot shall not exceed 1.5 square feet for each foot of street frontage on which the signs are located.
  2. The District’s Design Guidelines governing signs are advisory only. They are not standards by which sign applications will be evaluated.
  3. For individual signs that total less than 50 square feet in area, the Department of Building and Safety may issue a building permit for the sign if the Director issues an administrative clearance, and if the Department of Building and Safety determines that the sign complies with Section 14.4 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code and all applicable Building Code provisions. The Director shall issue an administrative clearance if the total signage on the lot will not exceed 1.5 square feet for each foot of street frontage, and if the sign does not fall within any of the prohibited sign types listed below. In no case shall the Director consider the content or message of any proposed sign.
  4. For individual signs that exceed 50 square feet in area, the Department of Building and Safety may only issue a building permit if the Director issues an approval under Section 13.08 E of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, and if the Department of Building and Safety determines that the sign complies with Section 14.4 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code and all applicable provisions of the Building Code. In lieu of the findings set forth in Section 13.08 E. 3 of the Municipal Code, the Director shall make the following findings in writing:
    - a. The sign does not fall within any of the prohibited sign types listed below;
    - b. The total signage on the lot will not exceed 1.5 square feet for each foot of street frontage;
    - c. and the sign is compatible with the surrounding environment.

*Compatibility shall be determined by the relationships of the elements of form, proportion, scale, color, materials, surface treatment, overall sign size and the size and style of lettering. The surrounding environment shall be comprised of other nearby signs, other elements of street and site furniture, and adjacent and surrounding properties, including residential areas. The Director's written findings must explain why the proposed sign is or is not compatible with the surrounding environment. The Director may also conditionally approve a sign, including conditions that would render the proposed sign compatible with the surrounding environment. In no case shall the Director consider the content or message of any proposed sign.*

5. In addition to the signs that are prohibited in Section 14.4 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, the following signs are prohibited in the district:
  - a. Can signs
  - b. Monument signs
  - c. Pole signs
  - d. Sail signs/wind banners.

*Sail signs/wind banners are defined as a freestanding or mounted sign that is supported by a flexible or semi-flexible or partial frame within which material constructed of vinyl, paper, or other wind-resistant and moveable materials.*

- e. Temporary signs for which the Los Angeles Municipal Code requires a permit.

### C. Procedures for All Other Project Approvals

The provisions of the Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 13.08 E shall apply to all other project approvals.

## DEFINITIONS

The following words and phrases, whenever used in this document, shall be construed as defined in this Section. Words and phrases not defined herein shall be construed as defined in Sections 12.03 and 13.07 C of the LAMC.

**Arcade:** An arched or covered passageway, usually with shops on each side.

**Articulation:** Clear and distinct separation between design elements or sections of a building façade, including variation in detail, color and materials and modulation of wall planes.

**Awnings and Canopies:** Awnings are usually made of cloth and are framed by wood or metal. Canopies are permanently affixed to buildings, are flat and constructed of solid materials.

**Baffle:** An artificial obstruction for deflecting the flow of sound or light.

**Bulkhead (or base):** Base of the storefront between the sidewalk and the window.

**Forecourt:** A courtyard before the entrance to a building or group of buildings.

**Historic Assessment:** A supplemental report that may be required by staff to determine the effects of a proposed project on a historic resource. Staff will determine the level of evaluation that will be required. Applicants will be required to engage a qualified historic consultant to prepare any such required evaluations.

**Mixed Use Project:** A development comprised of one or more building uses, such as retail space and residential space.

**Overdoor:** An ornamented carving, painting, or section of decorated woodwork over a doorway.

**Paseo or Pedestrian Walkway:** Walkway that is typically open to the sky and that provides pedestrian passage between structures, or through landscaping, or parking lots, which is distinguished by ground surface treatments that provide for pedestrian safety and ease of movement.

**Pedestrian Orientation:** Neighborhood design that incorporates design features and elements that are human scaled and can be used and

enjoyed by pedestrians. An urban development pattern where buildings and landscaping are proportioned and located so that walking is safe, comfortable and inviting.

**Plant-ons (or architectural implantations):**

Molding overlays that are attached to a building's exterior. Plant-ons typically project from the exterior wall and serve to accent a building feature. They are typically used to frame windows in order to create the appearance of recessed windows.

**Premise:** A building or portion thereof used as a location for a single business.

**Preservation:** Repair or renovation to a historic building that is sensitive to those features and characteristics that contribute to its historic significance.

**Prevailing Setback:** (Also see property line): the most commonly reoccurring line between the property line and the façade of the building on the same block or street frontage. In Little Tokyo, the prevailing setback in many cases coincides with the property line or is offset from the property line between 6 and 12 inches for purposes of this plan, the main structural elements of a building must be located on the prevailing setback line to maintain the streetwall, while storefronts and building entryways may be recessed.

**Project:** The erection, construction, addition to, or exterior alterations to any building or structure within the boundary area of the Little Tokyo Design Guide including signs, canopies/awnings, façade alterations, the addition of roof equipment, and significant landscaping. A project does not include the following: (a) construction that consists solely of interior remodeling or interior rehabilitation or repair work and (b) alterations of, including structural repairs, or additions to any existing building or structure façade that does not front a public street, and in which the aggregate value of the work, in any one 24-month period, is less than 50 percent of the building or structure's replacement value before the alterations or additions, as determined by the department of building and safety. (The exemption does not apply if the alterations or additions are to any exterior wall fronting a public street. Property line (or lot line): the line separating the lot from the street.

**Rehabilitation:** Rehabilitation shall generally refer to a method of treatment of historic structures that focuses on preserving existing historic fabric; repairing rather than replacing deteriorated com-

ponents; replacing individual components rather than entire features and incorporating new features rather than historic recreations when adequate documentation is not available. Replacement of missing and/or deteriorated (too deteriorated to repair) elements shall generally require use of in-kind materials. When in-kind materials are technically or economically infeasible, compatible substitute materials that convey the same form, design and overall visual appearance as the original may be considered.

**Restoration:** Restoration shall generally refer to a method of treatment of historic structures that focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property's history, while permitting the removal of materials from other periods.

**Reconstruction:** Reconstruction shall generally refer to a method of treatment of historic structures that establishes limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object in all new materials.

**Sail Sign/Wind Banner:** A freestanding or mounted sign that is supported by a flexible or semi-flexible or partial frame within which material constructed of vinyl, paper, or other wind-resistant and moveable materials.

**Setback:** The distance between the property line and the façade of the building.

**Sidewalk Grade:** The level of the sidewalk abutting the façade of a building fronting a public right-of-way.

**Streetwall (or street edge):** The vertical face of one or more buildings adjacent and parallel to the sidewalk. The cumulative façade effect created on a pedestrian oriented corridor when structures are built to the front lot-line and built to the edge of each side lot-line or the prevailing setback.

**Storefront Bay:** That area enclosed by the storefront cornice above, piers on the side, and the sidewalk at the bottom. Sometimes storefronts are placed entirely within one storefront bay, usually in older structures. Recessed storefront bays add visual interest to the streetwall, frame display windows, and create an inviting shopping environment.

**Structural Bay:** Any division of a wall marked off by vertical supports.

**Tower:** A building or portion thereof that exceeds 150 feet in height.

# Design Guidelines & Standards

## SITE PLANNING

Site Planning involves the proper placement and orientation of structures, open spaces, parking, pedestrian and vehicular circulation on a given site. Factors such as the size and massing of buildings, the orientation of storefronts, clearly identifiable and enhanced entries and circulation greatly influence the quality of the pedestrian experience.



The purpose of good site design is to create a functional and attractive development, to minimize adverse impacts, and to ensure that a project will be an asset to the community. Buildings should be sited in a manner that is compatible with the orientation of existing buildings with an emphasis on promoting pedestrian activity along Little Tokyo sidewalks and facilitating pedestrian access to and from the sidewalk to adjacent properties.

The site planning of new buildings and the rehabilitation of existing buildings in the Little Tokyo CDO should encourage:

- Good design (with complementary landscaping) that create vibrant commercial areas fostering a pleasant and desirable character, pedestrian activity, and economic vitality;

- Continuity of the historic and cultural context of buildings in relationship to the existing pattern and scale of streets, sidewalks, meetings areas, and parking;
- Harmony between new and existing buildings, and sensitivity to the scale, form, height, and proportion of surrounding development;
- Compatible building orientation to streets, which promotes pedestrian activity along the sidewalks of Little Tokyo, and facilitates pedestrian access to and from the sidewalk to adjacent properties;
- Easy sidewalk access for pedestrians by locating vehicle access and loading areas where there will be minimal physical or visual impact on pedestrians, the flow of traffic, and/or adjacent uses;
- The incorporation of Japanese architectural and design motifs, where appropriate, into the physical design of a project expresses and reinforces the unique cultural character of Little Tokyo. Projects should consider incorporating concepts of Japanese aesthetics, including grace, subtlety, simplicity, and tranquility, into contemporary building design. This can be reflected through the design of open space, massing, articulation, facades, exterior surface materials, signage, and/or landscaping, drawing from the rich tradition of Japanese aesthetics. Pictorial recreations and ornamental architectural elements should not be included as part of projects.

### 1. Building Orientation And Frontage

**Guideline 1:** Position buildings to promote pedestrian activity along the public right of way by placing business entrances on the street. Blank walls and driveways are physical intrusions on a pedestrian-oriented street and should be avoided. Developments should not face inward but rather should be oriented towards the street or public walkway to maintain and enhance the pedestrian-oriented character of the district.

**Guideline 1a:** Buildings should be built to the front lot line or required sidewalk easement, when required by the Downtown Street Standards. Corner

buildings should be built to both the front and side lot lines. Building setbacks may be permitted when the setback area is used for public open space such as patios, Plazas, courtyards, outdoor dining, seating, kiosks, and/or landscaping.

**Guideline 1b:** All buildings shall have a primary ground floor entrance that serves the building as a whole. In addition, there shall be at least one entryway serving each business fronting a public street or pedestrian facility. Corner buildings at major intersections should have corner entrances that emphasize the location of the building at the intersection.

**Guideline 1c:** All primary entrances to a building shall be oriented to the abutting street(s). When a project abuts a primary or retail street and/or identified pedestrian facilities, primary entrances shall be oriented to these streets, alleys and pedestrian facilities. Where a development fronts one of these streets or alleys on more than one side, entrances will be provided on each side or at the corner in a manner that is visible from both streets.

**Guideline 1d:** For portions of projects where the ground floor contains residential units, individual entrances to the ground floor units are encouraged. For such projects, each entrance should be set back three to five feet from the sidewalk, to allow room for transitional landscaping. Walk-up-style units are also encouraged. For such projects, each entrance should be step - up two to five feet above adjacent sidewalk grade, to provide a vertical transition between the public and private realms.

**Guideline 1e:** Projects with rear lot lines abutting a street, alley, or parking lot should incorporate pedestrian entrances that are easily identifiable at the rear lot line in addition to those on the main corridors.

**Guideline 1f:** Locate utilities, storage areas, mechanical equipment, fire alarms, sprinklers and other service areas away from the primary/ retail streets and screen so that they are not visible from the public right-of-way.

**Guideline 1g:** Project design should provide for a variety of shops and extended day activities at ground level street frontages.

**Guideline 1h:** Design for ground-level uses on secondary streets that are neighborhood-oriented and appeal to local residents.



#### 75% Retail Streets:

- First Street, from Los Angeles Street to Alameda Street
- Second Street, from Los Angeles Street to Alameda Street
- Third Street, from Los Angeles Street to Alameda Street
- Central Avenue, from 1st Street to Towne Avenue
- Little Tokyo Pedestrian Spine, including Japanese Village Plaza Mall and Azusa Street Onizuka Street

**Guideline 1i:** For industrial buildings, locate all “front of house” operations, i.e. Offices, at the front of the building, closest to the pedestrian walkway.

**Guideline 1j:** Reflect the unique identity of Little Tokyo in building design at identified gateways (see attached map), with an emphasis on establishing a sense of place and marking an entrance to the district with the use of symbols of Japanese culture (E.G., Stone lanterns, banners, etc.) And appropriate materials (E.G., Cloth, stone, wood, etc.). Building design and orientation should prominently identify points of entry into the ethnic neighborhood.

**Guideline 1k:** Consider incorporating Japanese design aesthetics into the arrangement of buildings and spaces to help reinforce the cultural character of the Little Tokyo community. Japanese architecture is characterized by its sensitive appreciation of and harmony with nature. Buildings should be arranged so that interior space is integrated with and interacts with outdoor spaces as much as possible. The traditional Japanese veranda, engawa, reflects this aesthetic by serving to link the inside and outside of a structure as one continuous environment.

## 2. Open Space

The linkage between vibrant open space and accessible pedestrian circulation is key. A central path system or “spine” through a community connects important destinations within the community, contributing to its cohesiveness. A central pathway also allows for easy access and circulation.

Little Tokyo’s central path system near Temple on the north with the Go For Broke Monument and travels southeast past the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), then southwest through the Japanese Village Plaza (JVP) then to the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) Plaza, and then proceeding west along Azusa Street through the Block 8 mixed-use project, leading to the Little Tokyo Library, and the anticipated Little Tokyo Recreation Center on Los Angeles street. (See map.)

Key elements, or branches, along the “spine” include the Museum Of Contemporary Art, East West Players’ David Henry Hwang Theater, Weller Court, Little Tokyo Branch Library, New Otani Hotel, Japan America/Aratani Theater, Little Tokyo Towers, Casa Heiwa, Honda Plaza, Little Tokyo Mall (formerly Mitsuwa Plaza).

An easy to follow pedestrian path system would connect the major destinations in Little Tokyo, including those that overlap the Arts District. In addition, the path system would lead to open spaces and gateways, such as the proposed Art Park being planned for the north side of East 1st street. The path system could also incorporate public art and/or other symbols of Japanese culture and heritage.

**Guideline 2:** Encourage open space as part of a project site design to invite and encourage pedestrian activity. Create inviting spaces, provide shade, screen unattractive areas and enhance architectural detailing through the thoughtful and careful placement of landscaping. Paseos, arcades, forecourts and plazas should accommodate and promote pedestrian traffic and offer opportunities for amenities such as outdoor dining, sitting areas and landscaping.

**Guideline 2a:** Residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects are encouraged to provide public open space in the form of a plaza, paseo, outdoor dining area, or another similar space. Midblock pedestrian pathways or paseos should be encouraged through large sites, in conformance with the Downtown Design Guide. Forecourts, plazas and outdoor areas should include seating, dining areas, landscaping and/or shade elements. Shade-trees, sculptures and/or water features are also encouraged.

**Guideline 2b:** Buildings should have entrances that are oriented to its public open spaces and ground floor uses should activate those spaces.



Public open spaces should be designed to enhance visual connections with surrounding buildings, in order to promote safety and comfort.

**Guideline 2c:** Public open spaces should plan for and incorporate symbols of Little Tokyo's ethnic and cultural community, where appropriate. Existing public art and special features should be preserved and new public art and special community-oriented features should be incorporated into the design of new projects.

**Guideline 2d:** Projects are encouraged to use enriched paving and other distinctive materials to create user-friendly open spaces. The spaces should be easily maintainable and kept clean.

**Guideline 2e:** Consider incorporating different elements of nature, including water, natural features, etc. in garden and open space areas.

**Guideline 2f:** Projects should identify and prioritize opportunities for creating special places that capture significant history, memorialize special features, individuals, or characteristics of the neighborhood and which propose design solutions for specific sites.

**Guideline 2g:** Design open space elements to mark important places and create a sense of direction, movement, and arrival.

**Guideline 2h:** Public and private plazas are encouraged. Exterior building walls may define open spaces, but open spaces may not be surrounded by blank walls nor be separated from (either above or below) the sidewalk grade.

**Guideline 2i:** Projects abutting identified pedestrian facilities should contribute to, maintain, and enhance such facilities by lining them with retail, providing entryways for storefronts abutting such facilities and orienting any open space to such facilities.

**Guideline 2j:** Support improvements in public spaces that enable use of wireless communication technology (such as computer laptops and personal digital assistants).

**Guideline 2k:** Improve edges of public open spaces by providing active uses on the ground floor of buildings.

**Guideline 2l:** Provide seating opportunities for more user-friendly spaces but incorporate elements to discourage long term uses (sleeping).

**Guideline 2m:** Existing public art and special features should be preserved and new public art and special community-oriented features should be incorporated into the design of new projects, in public gathering areas and other key locations.

**Guideline 2n:** Design elements in open spaces should aim to capture significant history and memorialize special features, individuals or characteristics of the neighborhood. Promote the installation of kiosks with maps of the area with notable elements identified and described.

### 3. *Parking and Vehicular Access*

**Guideline 3:** Projects should accommodate vehicular access and parking in a way that is compatible with the context of the Little Tokyo district and maintains the integrity of street walls and street uses. Parking lots and structures should fit within the urban fabric; the massing, scale and façade articulation of parking structures should respond to the surroundings and provide a degree of three-dimensional interest. Parking design should minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, reduce the visibility of parked cars, and contribute to pedestrian-friendly street frontages.

**Guideline 3a:** On-site parking should be oriented away from adjacent street frontages and lined with habitable space to the extent feasible. In particular, on-site parking should not front identified Retail Streets. To the extent possible, parking for all new buildings should be located underground or located to the rear of the lot in a structure. Surface parking is discouraged and, where permitted, should not be located between the front property line and the primary building/storefront on the street.

**Guideline 3b:** Surface parking areas that adjoin a street should be screened by a durable barrier, such as a solid wall, fence, berm, hedge or landscaping that is tall enough to screen at least vehicle headlights.

**Guideline 3c:** For industrial buildings, locate both parking and loading facilities behind buildings and when possible, provide access through an alley or secondary street.

**Guideline 3d:** New freestanding parking structures shall be designed with ground floor commercial uses to a minimum depth of 25 feet from adjacent street frontages.

**Guideline 3e:** Parking structures shall be designed with architectural detailing and fenestration. Where associated with a larger project, parking levels or structures shall be visually integrated with other project components, in terms of material, color and other design elements. Structures should not overtly appear to be used for parking. Consider using HVAC elements, such as ducts and vents, as opportunities for creative expression.

**Guideline 3f:** Where appropriate, design parking levels with flexibility so as not to preclude conversion to other uses in the future.

**Guideline 3g:** Design parking areas with creative screening components to mitigate the impact of horizontal openings at every level while still allowing for ventilation. Create characteristic vertical elements to counterbalance the horizontality of the parking levels.

**Guideline 3h:** Automobiles on parking levels above the ground floor shall be screened from public view as seen from a public street or alley. Parking structures should also receive landscape treatment to eliminate unattractive views.

**Guideline 3i:** Protect nearby residents from potential adverse impacts – noise, visual, or otherwise – of parking structures.

**Guideline 3j:** Parking structures should be designed with the same care and principles as other buildings in Little Tokyo.

**Guideline 3k:** Vehicular entrances should not be located along Retail Streets (see map), where feasible. All vehicular entrances should be located off of a side street or an alley. Where potential for pedestrian-vehicular conflicts exist, safety measures should be included such as signage, audible signals, and a change in paving materials at the crossing of vehicular and pedestrian pathways. Pedestrian circulation shall be enhanced with enriched materials to create a favorable hierarchy for pedestrian use.

**Guideline 3l:** One driveway shall be permitted per every 200 feet of building frontage. Not more than two driveways shall be permitted per building, and at least 50 feet in distance should span between them. Variations will be permitted only if the Director of Planning determines that no other alternative exists that is consistent with these guidelines, after consultation with the Department of transportation.

**Guideline 3m:** Driveway widths should be as narrow as possible (12 feet for one-way driveways and 24-feet for two-way driveways). Driveways shall lead to underground parking or parking stalls located to the rear of the building.

**Guideline 3n:** For industrial buildings, all truck turning movements necessary to enter or exit loading docks shall be accommodated entirely within the site.

#### **4. Pedestrian Orientation**

**Guideline 4:** Develop interesting elements at street level that respect the pedestrian scale and make walking adjacent to a parking structure a pleasant experience. Landscaping, wall treatments, and lighting are elements that should be incorporated into the design.

**Guideline 4a:** Enhance blank walls with artwork, such as relief works, murals, cascading landscape plantings and wall sculptures.

**Guideline 4b:** Wherever possible, parking should be easily identified with prominent, uniform signage designed to fit into its architectural context and support a pedestrian-friendly environment.

**Guideline 4c:** Loading areas shall be located at the rear of structures for minimum visibility from the primary or Retail Streets or identified pedestrian facilities where there will be minimal negative impact on pedestrians, the flow of traffic, and uses adjacent to and across the street from the loading area.

**Guideline 4d:** Passenger loading zones located on the street should not impede foot traffic or sidewalks and should complement the pedestrian experience.

**Guideline 4e:** Parking lots and structures should be designed to provide safe pedestrian circulation between parked vehicles and the primary building through the use of clearly marked pedestrian walkways, stop signs, speed bumps, lighting, or other similar measures.

**Guideline 4f:** Clearly defined pedestrian walkways shall be provided to connect rear building entrances to parking areas.

**Guideline 4g:** Pedestrian linkages between buildings shall not extend over the public right-of-way.

## 5. Corporate Identity Architecture

**Guideline 5:** Buildings in the district should contribute to the architectural integrity of the surrounding area. Buildings used for franchise restaurants, retail space or other formula commercial uses that traditionally have a pre-determined corporate architectural identity may not be compatible with these guidelines. In such cases, buildings shall be redesigned so as to be consistent with these design and development guidelines.

**Guideline 5a:** All projects, including those related to franchise or corporate establishments, shall be designed to comply fully with the design and development guidelines.

## BUILDING ARTICULATION AND DETAILS

Development in Little Tokyo is often characterized as a “bowl,” with low - to medium - scale buildings at the core and surrounded at the edge by taller buildings. The neighborhood is further characterized by its pedestrian-oriented character. Travel through Little Tokyo is facilitated by a complete network of pedestrian pathways that link to the surrounding neighborhoods. The design and orientation of buildings along the pedestrian circulation network further contribute to a pedestrian-friendly environment. There is a largely a consistent streetwall of transparent storefronts and detailed building facades that create a pleasant experience for pedestrians. Large windows along many of the restaurants and retail establishments and visible activity on both sides of the glass puts “eyes on the street” and helps create perceptions of pedestrian safety. Finally, a system of signage for pedestrians helps with movement and orientation.

When a building’s ground-level space is walled off, boarded-up, or screened with security grilles, the quality of the pedestrian environment suffers. Blank walls at the ground floor reflect a missed opportunity to reinforce the character of the district, and the pedestrian experiences a sense of separation from the activity within the building. Additionally, conditions that visually block pedestrians’ views from the interiors of ground floors communicate a lack of safety.

Japanese architecture is characterized by its sense of order and control, as well as simplicity of form and proportion. A strong sense of proportion leads to structural harmony. Colors, textures, and materials should be as natural and harmonious as possible.

## 6. Building Scale And Massing

**Guideline 6:** Variations in massing can enhance the character and visual quality of a building, thereby establishing a comfortable scale. Building massing should be modulated and articulated to break up the scale of development, create a pedestrian friendly environment, and stimulate and enhance visual interest. Industrial buildings should be compatible with and complementary to the surrounding residential and commercial buildings by respecting the prevailing architectural scale and character.

**Guideline 6a:** Buildings should not be comprised of large unbroken solid masses. The visual monotony of a large building can be reduced by creating the appearance of multiple structures of varying size, and by designing components that reflect more fine-grained proportions and provide interest to pedestrians. Stepbacks can also be used to create visual relief by graduating the structure’s mass down into smaller, human scale components in order to provide variation and visual interest.

**Guideline 6b:** The commercial heart of the district, generally bounded by Central Avenue, Third Street, San Pedro Street, and the Historic District along the north side of First Street, has an overall lower scale than much of the remaining area. New buildings within these boundaries should help to complement this development pattern in their scale and massing.

**Guideline 6c:** The remainder of the district provides an opportunity for sensitively designed mid-rise (four to six stories or under 75 feet) and high-rise (over 75 feet) buildings that are integrated into the urban context. Avoid perimeter block massing and vary massing and elements within the site. New mid- and high-rise buildings should be strategically located to mark important nodes and intersections within Little Tokyo. Projects should be designed with appropriate stepbacks and height transitions when abutting or across the street, alley or pedestrian facility from the lower scale portion of the district.

**Guideline 6d:** Mixed-use projects that combine multi-family residential uses and small-scale neighborhood commercial uses with small offices or studios are encouraged, particularly along the south side of 3rd Street, to improve the transition between Little Tokyo and the industrial uses to the south.

**Guideline 6e:** The commercial portion of mixed-use development should relate to the scale, form, height and proportion of the residential portion. Ground floor uses should be distinguished from the upper façade with inviting and transparent storefronts and sensitively scaled proportions. Commercial ground floor frontage should be distinguishable from the residential facades and should provide a strong building base. Commercial uses should have greater window-to-wall ratios than a residential component.

**Guideline 6f:** To create a pedestrian scale on the ground floor of a building, the first floor height of any structure shall be a minimum of 12 feet.

## 7. Building Articulation

**Guideline 7:** Heighten visual interest and enhance pedestrian orientation by incorporating three-dimensional elements and material variation into the façade of buildings. These elements and variations include: Architectural features; changes in building materials, texture and color; generously sized transparent display windows; arcades, canopies, and awnings; cornices; and other details such as transom windows and overdoors. New developments should be governed by a formal architectural concept that integrates architectural details with massing, scale, and site design.

**Guideline 7a:** Building facades should be modulated and articulated to create interest and variety. The project should employ one or more of the following vertical elements: Columns, pilasters, indentations, storefront bays, or vertical landscaping to break up the horizontal massing of a building.

**Guideline 7b:** Projects should differentiate the sidewalk-level of the building from the middle and top portions through building articulation, projections, cornices, change in materials, etc. On building facades, emphasis should be placed on horizontal lines.

**Guideline 7c:** Provide variety in façade treatments along a block face through the design of building

frontages, while adhering to a cohesive and unifying design concept.

**Guideline 7d:** For renovations of existing commercial buildings, the building base (the first two (2) to five (5) feet above the sidewalk) should be differentiated from the rest of the building façade with treatments such as change in material and/or color.

**Guideline 7e:** Ground floor facades should be particularly detailed through the use of storefronts, storefront glazing, entryways, awnings and canopies and other design elements.

**Guideline 7f:** Large unbroken surfaces should be avoided by creating breaks in the streetwall and by dividing wide storefronts into structural bays. Storefront bays create articulation in low-rise buildings and contribute to a pedestrian-oriented street. Recessed storefront bays add visual interest to the streetwall, frame display windows, and create an inviting environment.

**Guideline 7g:** Consider exposing structural elements on building facades to add articulation and reflect a Japanese-influenced design. Exterior roof eaves, beams, posts, columns, and other exposed framing can be either a function part of the structural support of a building or purely decorative in nature. Wood, clay, steel, or concrete materials can all be successfully utilized in this way. Where appropriate to a chosen building design, wood cladding or adornment can also be used to enhance articulation on a building facade.

**Guideline 7h:** Mixed use and residential developments are encouraged to integrate balconies and terraces to provide building articulation, particularly on facades facing streets and walkways, to encourage “eyes on the street.”

**Guideline 7i:** Industrial building facades with loading docks should maintain a level of detail and style used on the main facility, especially if visible from residential uses.

## 8. Entry Treatments

**Guideline 8:** The entrance to a building has an important relationship to the street and is one of the most important parts of the building facade. Dominant entryways reinforce the character of the building, add visual interest, break the mo-

notony of flat surfaces, add a vertical element and create an inviting entrance. Emphasize pedestrian orientation and accessibility by creating well-articulated and inviting building entrances, and by orienting these entrances towards the adjacent primary/Retail Streets.

**Guideline 8a:** Building entrances are encouraged to be recessed and/or defined by distinct architectural treatments. These treatments can include: Variation in materials, lighting, awnings, textured paving, attractive signage, and planters. Identify the building entry by recessing or projecting the opening, by using awnings or special signage, or by varying the façade treatment around the entry. Consider moveable walls to open up and create more flexible interior/exterior relationships.

**Guideline 8b:** Storefront entrances should be designed so that they are a predominant architectural feature on the building façade and create an inviting entrance.



**Guideline 8c:** Each individual tenant or business space located on the ground floor shall have an entrance directly accessible from the street at the same grade as the sidewalk. Primary access shall be from a public open space, public street, forecourt or arcade or identified pedestrian facility. Ground floor residential units should be directly accessible from the street.

**Guideline 8d:** Projects with rear lot lines abutting a street, alley, or parking lot should incorporate pedestrian entrances that are easily identifiable and enhanced at the rear lot line in addition to those on primary pedestrian-oriented corridors.

**Guideline 8e:** For industrial developments, pedestrian access paths to public entrances shall be delineated clearly from vehicular and truck access, especially as they transition to the public sidewalk.

## 9. Windows

**Guideline 9:** All projects should have as many windows as possible on the ground floor when facing a street or pedestrian walkway. There should be little or no blank wall area, except to separate buildings or retail/office space. This increases safety by allowing businesses to have 'eyes on the street' while people on the street see interior building activities. Pedestrians should be able to sense the ground floor activity inside the building.

**Guideline 9a:** Encourage an active and attractive pedestrian environment by providing a significant level of transparency at the ground floor on building facades facing public streets. For commercial and retail buildings, at least 60 percent of the building façade at ground level shall consist of transparent doors and/or windows.

**Guideline 9b:** Doors and windows should be of clear, untinted, and nonreflective glass for all portions of a building, except for architectural or decorative accent. Use clear and non-reflective glass allowing a minimum of 90 percent light transmission, unless considered a safety hazard.

**Guideline 9c:** Individual storefront display windows shall not be used for storage or left empty without window displays. However, window displays shall not cover or block views into the building interior. Storefronts should allow maximum visibility from sidewalk areas into the interior of all commercial uses.

**Guideline 9d:** Residential units with individual entrances should include windows at ground level.

**Guideline 9e:** Windows should project or be recessed (set back) from the exterior building wall, except where inappropriate to the building's architectural style. The required change in plane may not be accomplished by the use of plant-ons around the window.

**Guideline 9f:** Windows on levels above the ground floor should be evenly and regularly spaced to create a discernible rhythm. Planter boxes are encouraged to create a softening of the architectural façade.

**Guideline 9g:** For projects with industrial uses, screen ground floor industrial activities from the street.

## **10. Facades, Exterior Surface materials & Color**

**Guideline 10:** The texture of building facades should be complementary to other buildings in the surrounding area. Large expanses of the same building material detract from the aesthetics of a building. Use of varied and complementary building material reduces the mass of a building, and creates visual interest.



**Guideline 10a:** The exterior facade of low-and mid-rise buildings should incorporate no more than three complementary building materials, including but not limited to glass, tile, smooth stucco or stone. Textured stucco is strongly discouraged.

**Guideline 10b:** Mid and high-rise buildings should not have monotonous exteriors, and should employ building materials that create an interesting variety of facades to reduce massiveness and glare impacts on surrounding uses and motorists.

**Guideline 10c:** Encourage the use of high-quality and/or enriched materials, particularly along the ground floor and at key locations, such as intersections, major entries, and places of significance.

**Guideline 10d:** Differentiate the ground floor from the upper stories through the use of complementary but different building materials, textures, colors, and size of openings.

**Guideline 10e:** Strengthen the connection between the sidewalk and street-facing building facades by enhancing visual interest to pedestrians.

**Guideline 10f:** Planter boxes are encouraged on upper story windows and patio areas to cascade and create a softening of the architectural façade, where feasible.

**Guideline 10g:** Paved areas, excluding parking and driveway areas, should consist of enhanced paving materials such as stamped concrete, permeable paved surfaces, tile and/or brick pavers.

**Guideline 10h:** Color schemes should be selected in relation to the overall design intent of the building and should be simple, harmonious and complement adjacent structures. Bright or intense colors and stark colors such as white or black shall not be utilized for large areas. Bright colors on architectural detailing, trim, window sashes, doors and frames, or awnings may be used if they are compatible with the color scheme of the building.

**Guideline 10i:** For industrial uses, walls shall be sealed with anti-graffiti coating. Planted walls are best to discourage graffiti.

## **11. Cultural Design Details**

**Guideline 11:** Consider façade treatments that subtly express Japanese-inspired design aesthetics, where appropriate to the overall design concept.

**Guideline 11a:** Consider exposing structural elements on building facades. Exterior roof eaves, beams, posts, columns, and other exposed framing are a common characteristic of Japanese-influenced designs, and can be either a function part of the structural support of a building or purely decorative in nature. Wood, clay, steel, or concrete materials can all be successfully utilized in this way. Half-timbering applied to stucco surfaces is also a traditional Japanese representation of this type of treatment. Where appropriate to a chosen building design, wood cladding or adornment should be considered for use on exterior building facades.

**Guideline 11b:** Consider the use of natural materials, particularly wood and stone. Wood should be left with its natural finish, rather than painted over.

**Guideline 11c:** Consider whole facades that can be opened, as the boundary between the interior and exterior of a building is typically fluid rather than rigidly defined. One way to reach this goal is through increased transparency, possibly through the use of glass or light-weight translucent materials.

**Guideline 11d:** Overall, strive for simplicity. Designs should be understated—not cluttered or distractingly ornamented.

## 12. Lighting

Lighting can be used as a unifying element, defining districts and streets and conveying moods. Lighting should be used to light both vehicular and pedestrian pathways.

**Guideline 12:** Lighting should be incorporated into the design not only to accentuate architectural features, but also to provide a safe environment for pedestrian activity. Outdoor lighting in front of buildings provides security for pedestrians at nighttime. All open areas, including parking lots, walkways, and trash areas, should have security lighting for safety.

**Guideline 12a:** Provide lighting along all vehicular access ways and pedestrian walkways. Recessed lighting on the ground along vehicular access ways and pedestrian walkways is highly encouraged.

**Guideline 12b:** Incorporate wall-mounted fixtures into the design of buildings to emphasize and define building entrances and to contribute to the nighttime ambience.

**Guideline 12c:** Encourage building owners to illuminate signage and to use interior lighting for nighttime effect.

**Guideline 12d:** Illuminate landmarks and use lighted trees along major pedestrian streets at night.

**Guideline 12e:** Locate lights in areas of pedestrian/vehicular interface and other safety areas.

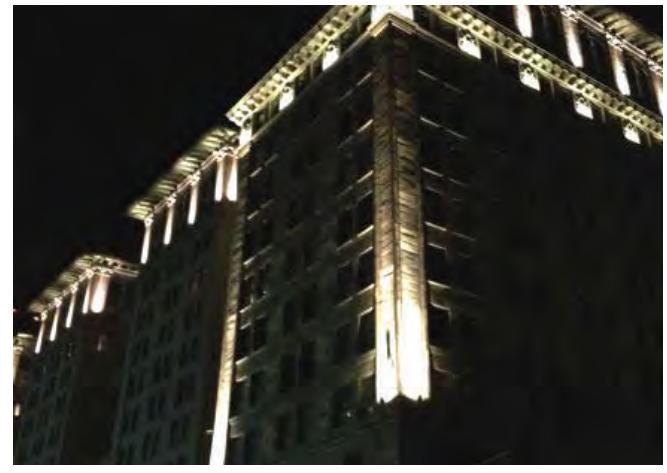
**Guideline 12f:** Provide for nighttime illumination of showcases and other building interiors abutting Retail Streets.

**Guideline 12g:** Provide a secondary source of sidewalk illumination through exterior lighting on street-facing building facades.

**Guideline 12h:** Exterior lighting fixtures should be compatible with the architectural design of the building. Japanese design motifs for lighting are strongly encouraged.

**Guideline 12i:** All exterior lighting should be directed onto the lot and away from neighboring development, and all flood lighting should be designed to eliminate glare to adjoining properties. Flood lamps or floodlights, or similar contemporary lighting fixtures will not be permitted.

**Guideline 12j:** Circular, arch or gooseneck types of light fixtures are highly recommended.



## **13. Awnings And Canopies**

**Guideline 13:** Where appropriate, use awnings or canopies to define the public realm of the sidewalk, provide shelter and shade, and enhance the building façade by adding variation, color, and horizontal rhythm. Awnings and canopies reinforce a pedestrian scale and add a comfortable sense of enclosure to outdoor seating and other active public uses.

**Note:** Projections into the public right-of-way, extending beyond private property, must obtain proper approval from the Department of Public Works bureau of engineering. A revocable permit may be necessary.

**Guideline 13a:** Size and placement of awnings and canopies should enhance the building's overall frame, detailing, and rhythm. Placement should correspond to the location of a storefront or entrance.

**Guideline 13b:** For awnings located above windows, awning shapes shall be consistent with window frames.

**Guideline 13c:** Awnings and canopies shall be constructed of high-quality, durable, fade-resistant, and fire-retardant materials. There are several types of awnings and canopies ranging from canvas to structural space frames.

**Guideline 13d:** All awnings must be retractable, and can be attached above the display windows and below the cornice or sign panel. It is highly recommended that the awning be mounted between the transom and the display windows, as this will allow light into the store while shading the merchandise and pedestrian from the sun. The letter height on the awning valance shall not exceed six (6) inches.

## **APPURTENANCES**

### **14. Security Grilles**

Many building owners and tenants hesitate to allow large areas of unprotected glass at the ground level because of security and safety concerns. Common responses to those concerns include boarding up of the entire ground floor

or adding security grilles. These conditions deface the built environment as well as create a sense of danger for residents and visitors.

**Guideline 14:** Provide storefront security as needed without obscuring storefront windows and creating blank walls along the sidewalk. Minimize the presence of security grilles and bars as visible from the street.

**Guideline 14a:** Premises should employ non-barrier (alarm or sensor) theft-deterrent systems where possible. If such security systems are not feasible, interior security grilles or vandal-proof glazing that is resistant to impact should be used on any storefronts.

**Guideline 14b:** External security grilles or roll-down security grilles that conceal storefront windows are prohibited and shall not be affixed to any facade abutting a public right-of-way.

**Guideline 14c:** For industrial uses, visibility for security purposes shall be balanced with screening of stored goods and industrial activities. Windows that need extra protection shall have security features that do not block out more than 30% of the natural light to the interior, and be designed as an architectural feature compatible with the building's style.

## **15. Utilities, Mechanical Equipment, Trash Containers & Loading**

**Guideline 15:** Improve the pedestrian environment along the sidewalk and minimize visual blight by obscuring unsightly equipment adjacent to streets and other public rights-of-way.

**Guideline 15a:** Utility lines should be placed underground for all new developments subject to site plan review as approved by the Department of Water and Power.

**Guideline 15b:** All utility boxes or facilities shall be installed below grade in the public rights-of-way.

**Guideline 15c:** Utilities, storage areas, trash bins, air conditioning units, fire alarms, and similar equipment shall be placed to the rear of the site or underground when feasible. Otherwise, structures housing such elements shall be enclosed or screened with landscaping, and designed in a way as to be as inconspicuous as possible.

**Guideline 15d:** All exterior mechanical equipment, including HVAC equipment, satellite dishes, cellular antennas, should not be visible from public rights-of-way. No mechanical equipment E.G., Air conditioners shall be permitted in window or door openings.

**Guideline 15e:** Consider using HVAC elements such as ducts and vents as opportunities for creative expression, particularly where these elements are visible to surrounding buildings.

**Guideline 15f:** Rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened with materials that are architecturally integrated into the building.

## 16. Sidewalk Dining Enclosures

**Guideline 16:** Encourage outdoor dining on sidewalks near restaurants and cafes. Support an open and safe physical environment by designing enclosures for outdoor eating areas that do not detract from the quality of the pedestrian experience along the sidewalk.

*Note: projections into the public right-of-way, extending beyond private property, must obtain proper approval from the Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering. A revocable permit may be necessary.*

**Guideline 16a:** Enclosures must utilize open fence work. The materials and design should be decorative and coordinate with the structures on the site.

**Guideline 16b:** No fence or wall abutting a public street shall be taller than 36 inches.



## SIGNS

Signage is used to identify the character of a business, advertise its location, and assist people in locating their destination. Signage should be designed in such a way that it accomplishes these objectives without creating visual clutter or dominating the visual appearance of the area. Since the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay aims to create a more pedestrian friendly environment, signs should be sized and oriented to persons walking along adjacent sidewalks and pedestrian pathways. Pedestrian-scale signage (i.e., at a height and of a size that is visible to pedestrians) can help to identify the structure and use and facilitate access to the entrance. Signage directed toward automobile users is typically over-scaled for a pedestrian environment.

Without standards, most signage is developed for maximum visibility. The result is often a state of visual chaos in which signage conflicts with architecture, and there is no coordination between the signage of neighboring buildings. The overall size, materials and graphic composition of signs should be integrated with the building and landscape design and should complement the façade or architectural element on which it is placed.

Additionally, the signage guidelines for the Little Tokyo Historic District (Appendix A) shall apply to the National Register Historic District Area along the north side of 1st Street, between Judge John Aiso and Central Avenue.

## **S1. General – All Signs**

**Guideline S1a:** Promote the identity and success of individual businesses while enhancing the visual quality of Little Tokyo through context-sensitive signage design. Ensure that signage design is appropriate in terms of location, layout, and style. Minimize sign clutter and emphasize pedestrian-scale design.

**Standard S1b:** As adopted by ordinance, signage shall be compatible with the surrounding environment. Compatibility shall be determined by the relationships of the elements of form, proportion, scale, color, materials, surface treatment, overall sign size, and the size and style of lettering. The surrounding environment shall be comprised of other nearby signs, other elements of street and site furniture, and adjacent and surrounding properties, including residential areas.

**Guideline S1c:** Signs should be considered as a component of building design and should complement buildings with respect to style, design, materials, and colors. Signage should be integrated with architectural elements, where feasible.

**Guideline S1c:** The size and location of signage should be designed to respect the viewing experience of the pedestrian over those in vehicles, especially along pedestrian-oriented Retail Streets. Project applicants are encouraged to consider pedestrian oriented signage options such as projecting signs.

**Guideline S1d:** Encourage the use of Japanese writing (e.g., katakana, kanji, calligraphy) in project signage, to reinforce the cultural character of Little Tokyo.

**Guideline S1e:** Projects should provide a unified signage system, while incorporating a cohesive range of sign design for individual identity.

## **S2. Directional Signage**

**Guideline S2:** Signage directing visitors should be coordinated and provide a cohesive, unified design for the district.

**Guideline S2a:** Incorporate a bold and legible signage system at neighborhood gateways, entry points, and strategic locations within Little Tokyo. The use of Japanese writing (e.g., Katakana) is encouraged, as well as the use of symbols of

Japanese culture (e.g., Stone lanterns, banners) and appropriate materials (e.g., Cloth, stone, wood).

**Guideline S2b:** In areas of pedestrian concentration and visitor-serving uses, projects should provide orientation maps, directional signs, tourist information boards, kiosks, or other wayfinding signage.

**Guideline S2c:** Projects are encouraged to provide plaques at the pedestrian level to identify notable gateway and other important elements within Little Tokyo.

**Guideline S2d:** The Little Tokyo logo that currently appears on all municipal signage and on wayfinding signage installed throughout the Downtown area should be incorporated into all visual references to Little Tokyo such as maps, web sites, printed materials, and brochures. This logo could be incorporated in tile form in walkways to identify key areas or along certain paths. Standards have been established by the wayfinding confederation grant for use of the logo. Those wanting to use this logo for publication should contact the Little Tokyo business improvement district.

## **S3. Prohibited Signs**

**Standard S3a:** As adopted by ordinance, the following sign types are prohibited within the Little Tokyo CDO area:

- Can signs
- Monument signs
- Pole signs
- Sail signs/wind banners
- Temporary signs for which the Los Angeles Municipal Code requires a permit.

*Note: temporary signs shall be permitted pursuant to Section 14.4.16 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.*

*Note: Projections into the public right-of-way, extending beyond private property, must obtain proper approval from the Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering. A revocable permit may be necessary.*

*Note: In no case shall the Director consider the content or message of any proposed sign.*

## *S4. Sign Illumination*

**Guideline S4:** Signage illumination should be used sparingly and at a pedestrian scale. Overly bright illumination, digital signage and internally lit signage that is intended to capture the attention of motorists generally does not invite pedestrian use or prolonged visits to the district outside of immediate car trips. External illumination for signage is encouraged in lieu of internally lit signage.

**Guideline S4a:** Reverse channel letters or externally lit individually cut letters are encouraged in lieu of internally lit channel letters.

## LANDSCAPING

### *L5. Site Landscaping*

**Guideline L1:** Landscaping should complement building design in a way that creates vibrant commercial areas by enhancing architectural detailing, screening unattractive areas, supporting pedestrian activity, promoting economic vitality, and fostering a pleasant and desirable character. Landscaping may include plant materials such as trees, shrubs, ground cover, perennials, annuals, as well as rocks, water features, sculpture, art, or paving materials.

**Guideline L1a:** All areas of a site not occupied by buildings, driveways, or used for outdoor dining shall be landscaped; 80% of landscaped areas shall consist of plant materials.

**Guideline L1b:** For new developments subject to site plan review, trees shall be planted in the adjacent public right-of-way at a minimum ratio of one (1) tree for every 25 feet of lot length, to the satisfaction of the Urban Forestry Division, Bureau of Street Services, Department of Public Works or to the Department of Transportation.

**Guideline L1c:** Utilize small urns, vessels, or pots with plant material at entrances, as window and architectural accents, or to screen unattractive areas. Plant materials shall be well maintained.

**Guideline L1d:** Blank walls or other unattractive areas of a site or building shall be screened with landscaping.

**Guideline L1e:** Utilize plant vines on existing blank walls to prevent graffiti.

**Guideline L1f:** Projects are encouraged to include elements in the landscape that mark important places in the community and create a sense of direction, movement, arrival.

**Guideline L1g:** Landscape the street and building edges of parking lots and enhance existing chain link fences with landscaping, or replace with wrought iron or "art fences". The use of razor wire is prohibited.

## *L6. Landscaping Design*

**Guideline L2:** Encourage the expression of Japanese-inspired aesthetics through landscape design, without limiting the use of other design concepts.

**Guideline L2a:** Consider landscaping design elements that reflect symbols of Little Tokyo's ethnic and cultural community, such as stone lanterns, banners, and use of natural materials (e.g., cloth, stone, wood). This should be considered particularly at identified neighborhood gateways, to prominently mark the points of entry into Little Tokyo and establish a sense of place in conjunction with a unified building design.

**Guideline L2b:** Utilize plant species and materials in landscaping that reflect Japanese cultural character, as desired and appropriate to an overall design concept.

**Guideline L2c:** Increase the quantity of native and drought-tolerant plant species to reduce water use and promote sustainability goals.

**Guideline L2d:** Landscaped areas should be designed to provide effective stormwater management functions, where feasible.

**Guideline L2e:** Buildings designed for industrial uses should provide a minimum 5-foot landscaped setback along the sidewalk open to the sky. Plant a combination of vines and shrubs to provide a continuous "green screen." The setback may include stormwater collection/treatment planters, which may be a maximum of 3 feet high. The planters face should be planted with climbing plants or otherwise screened with landscaping to reduce the potential for graffiti.

**Guideline L2f:** Install a high-efficiency “smart” irrigation system, which includes a weather-based controller and, where feasible, in-line drip and bubblers, rather than overhead spray. Where overhead spray is used, heads should have low-precipitation nozzles to reduce run-off.

**Guideline L2g:** Landscape setbacks, where required, shall include a minimum 24-inch box tree for every 20 feet of street frontage. Trees installed shall have a minimum canopy diameter of 20 feet at the time of maturity.

**Guideline L2h:** Landscape setbacks, where required, shall include a 90-percent ground covering through the use of turf, grass, flowering plants and shrubs.

## 7. *Landscaping for Parking Lots and Structures*

**Guideline L3:** Enhance parking areas by providing landscaping that shades, buffers, and screens unattractive views of parking. Parking lots and structures should receive landscape treatment that is well integrated with the building design to enhance the aesthetic appearance of parking garages. Landscaping should provide a pleasing, safe, and secure environment for pedestrians on the street.

**Note:** Standards apply to areas that include six (6) or more parking stalls and shall be in addition to, and consistent with, the requirements set forth in Sections 12.21.A.6(G), a.6(H), and 12.21.A.6(I) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.

**Guideline L3a:** Ground covers that provide interest and complete coverage without excessive maintenance or water usage should be utilized. The landscaping should provide a buffer between the parking and other uses, soften glare from vehicles, and filter noise.

**Guideline L3b:** Where parking structures are not wrapped with retail uses at the ground floor, they shall be visually screened from frontage streets and adjoining uses by a landscape buffer consisting of trees, planters, and vegetation around their perimeters.

**Guideline L3c:** A five (5) foot landscaped buffer shall be located between parking areas and the property line wherever a surface parking lot abuts the public right-of-way. The landscaped buffer area should contain 24-inch box trees planted at

a ratio of one (1) for every ten (10) linear feet. At a minimum, these trees should measure a trunk diameter of two (2) inches and a height of ten (10) feet at the time of planting.

**Guideline L3d:** A minimum of seven (7) percent of the total area of surface parking shall be landscaped, including one (1) tree from every four (4) parking spaces evenly dispersed throughout the lot. Tree species should be of a variety that produces a large canopy, but does not produce excessive plant material.

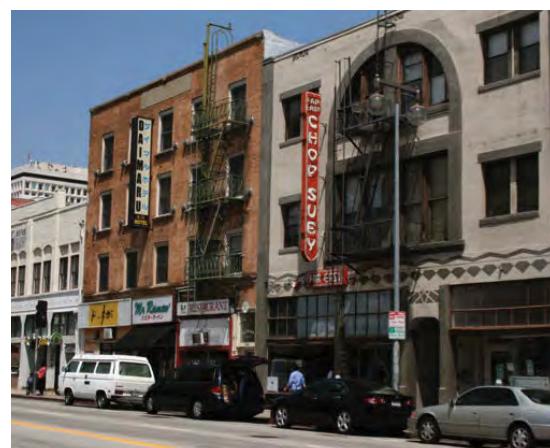
**Guideline L3e:** Landscape the street and building edges of any parking lots and enhance existing chain link fences with landscaping, or replace with wrought iron or “art fences”. The use of razor wire is prohibited.

## REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONTEXT SENSITIVE INFILL DEVELOPMENT.

### H1. *Historic Structures*

**Guideline H1:** Historic structures in Little Tokyo, particularly those in the Little Tokyo Historic District symbolize the cultural and social history of the Japanese-American community in Los Angeles. Improvements to the historic structures of Little Tokyo are meant to improve the quality of the pedestrian and commercial environment while preserving the community’s architectural and historic resources.

**Guideline H1a:** All projects within the Little Tokyo Historic District shall comply with the provisions of the Secretary of Interior’s standards for the treatment of historic properties, with



Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings and the Historic Guidelines found in Appendix A.

**Guideline G1a:** Projects at the identified primary gateways into Little Tokyo should include features to accentuate arrival into the neighborhood. A gateway should reflect the unique identity of Little Tokyo through the subtle use of certain symbols of Japanese culture and appropriate materials.

## PRIMARY GATEWAYS

### G1. Primary Gateways

**Guideline G1:** Gateways are the points of entry that establish an image or identity for the community being entered. Special attention should be given to important entry points to the community to bolster the historic and cultural character of Little Tokyo. The primary gateways into Little Tokyo are identified on the accompanying map.





# LITTLE TOKYO GUIDELINES CHECKLIST



Los Angeles  
Department of  
City Planning

## APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Zone \_\_\_\_\_

Project Description: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Check the appropriate boxes that apply to your project:

## GUIDELINE 1: BUILDING ORIENTATION AND FRONTEAGE

- 1a:** Buildings abut front lot line or required sidewalk easement, except where setback area is used for patios, plazas, courtyards, outdoor dining, seating, kiosks, and/or landscaping.
- 1b:** Buildings have a primary ground floor entrance. Refer to Standard 1b and 1c for specifications regarding individual businesses and corner buildings.
- 1c:** Primary ground floor entrances are oriented to abutting streets, alleys, and other pedestrian facilities.
- 1d:** Residential units have individual entrances that are set back 3 to 5-ft. from the sidewalk, to allow for transitional landscaping and/or include walk-up style units stepped up 2-5 ft. above adjacent sidewalk grade.
- 1e:** Pedestrian entrances are easily identifiable from abutting street, alley, or parking lot.
- 1f:** Utilities, storage areas, mechanical equipment, fire alarms, sprinklers, and other service areas are inconspicuous along the public right-of-way, especially on primary/retail streets.
- 1g:** Design provides for a variety of shops and extended day activities at ground level street frontages.
- 1h:** Design provides for ground level uses on secondary streets that appeal to neighborhood-oriented and appeal to local residents.
- 1i:** All "front of house" operations of industrial buildings, i.e. offices, are located close to the pedestrian walkway.
- 1j:** If located at Little Tokyo's identified gateways (see map), prominently marks the entrance to a unique ethnic community in its building design as well as its use of Japanese cultural symbols and appropriate materials.
- 1k:** Design incorporates Japanese design aesthetics into the arrangement of buildings and spaces to reinforce the cultural character of the Little Tokyo community.

## GUIDELINE 2: OPEN SPACE

- 2a:** Provides open space in the form of a plaza, paseo, outdoor dining area, landscaping, shade elements, sculptures, or water features.
- 2b:** Building entrances are oriented to public open spaces.
- 2c:** Design incorporates public art and other special community-oriented features that emphasize symbols of Little Tokyo's ethnic and cultural community in public open spaces.
- 2d:** Uses enriched paving and other distinctive materials to create user-friendly open spaces.
- 2e:** Incorporates different elements of nature, such as water or trees in gardens and public open spaces.
- 2f:** Identifies and prioritizes opportunities for creating spaces for commemorating history and memorializing significant features, individuals or characteristics of the neighborhood.
- 2g:** Incorporates open space elements that mark important places and create a sense of direction, movement, and arrival.
- 2h:** Incorporates plazas or open spaces that are neither surrounded by blank walls nor separated from sidewalk.
- 2i:** Provides retail experiences and entryways to storefronts or public open spaces.
- 2j:** Supports the use of wireless communication technology in public spaces.
- 2k:** Improves the edges of public open spaces by providing active uses on the ground floor of buildings.
- 2l:** Provides seating opportunities for more user-friendly spaces.
- 2m:** Preserves existing public art and character-defining features and/or incorporates new public art and community-oriented features into its design.
- 2n:** Captures significant history and memorializes special features, individuals or characteristics of neighborhood through design elements in open spaces.

## GUIDELINE 3: PARKING AND VEHICULAR ACCESS GUIDELINES

- 3a:** On-site parking is either underground or oriented away from adjacent streets; does not front Retail Streets; divide property line from primary building/storefront; and is lined with as much pedestrian traffic space as possible.
- 3b:** Surface parking areas adjoining a street are screened by a solid wall, fence, berm, hedge, or landscaping and are tall enough to block vehicle headlights.
- 3c:** Parking and loading facilities of industrial projects are located behind buildings and are accessible from an alley or secondary street.
- 3d:** Freestanding parking structures are located a minimum of 25 feet from adjacent street frontage and designed with ground floor commercial uses.
- 3e:** Parking structures incorporate aesthetically pleasing design elements, such as architectural detailing and fenestration and are visual integration with larger project.
- 3f:** Parking structure design is versatile and permits conversion of structure to other uses in the future.
- 3g:** Parking structure designed with creative screening components and vertical elements that function to mitigate and counterbalance the horizontality of parking lot openings.
- 3h:** Parking structure incorporates design features that screen automobiles on levels above ground floor from public view.
- 3i:** Ensures nearby residents are protected from potential adverse noise or visual impacts of parking structures.
- 3j:** Applies same level of care and principles to design of parking structure as other buildings in Little Tokyo.
- 3k:** Locates vehicular entrances off a side street or alleyway instead of along a Retail Streets (see map).
- 3l:** Contains less than two driveways located at least 50 feet apart from each other or one driveway every 200 feet of building frontage.
- 3m:** Ensures driveways meet standards for maximum widths (12 feet for one-way driveways and 24 feet for two way driveways).
- 3n:** Accommodates all truck turning movements necessary to enter/exit loading docks entirely on property.

## GUIDELINE 4: PEDESTRIAN ORIENTATION

- 4a:** Enhances blank walls with artwork, such as relief works, murals, cascading landscape plantings and wall sculptures.
- 4b:** Clearly identifies parking with prominent, uniform signage that aesthetically complements the structure's architecture and supports a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- 4c:** Ensures loading areas are inconspicuous from primary or retail streets and minimally impacts pedestrians, the flow of traffic, and the functions of nearby activities.
- 4d:** Passenger loading zones complement the pedestrian experience by permitting the flow of foot traffic on sidewalks.
- 4e:** Uses clearly marked pedestrian walkways, stop signs, speed bumps, lighting, or other similar measures in parking lots and structures.
- 4f:** Pedestrian walkways from rear building entrances to parking areas are clearly defined.
- 4g:** Pedestrian linkages between buildings do not extend over the public right of way.

## GUIDELINE 5: CORPORATE IDENTITY ARCHITECTURE

- 5a:** Fully complies with the Design Guidelines and Development Standards in all aspects including corporate architectural identities of franchises or corporate establishment have.

## GUIDELINE 6: BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING

- 6a:** Reduces visual monotony of large building by creating the appearance of multiple structures of varying size, and by designing components that reflect more fine-grained proportions to stimulate pedestrian interest.
- 6b:** Ensures that the design complements the lower scale and massing of existing buildings in the district's commercial heart, generally bounded by Central Avenue, Third Street, San Pedro Street, and the historic district along the north side of First Street.
- 6c:** If located outside of the commercial heart, has heterogeneous massing and strategically locates new mid- and high-rise buildings in important nodes and intersections in Little Tokyo.
- 6d:** Combines multi-family residential uses and small-scale neighborhood commercial uses with small offices or studios.
- 6e:** Ensures commercial portion of mixed-use development complements the scale, form, height, and proportion of the residential portion but has distinct facades, transparent floor fronts with greater window-to-wall ratios.
- 6f:** Creates first floor at pedestrian scale, or a minimum of 12 feet in height.

## GUIDELINE 7: BUILDING ARTICULATION

- 7a:** Incorporates vertical elements on façade, such as columns, pilasters, indentations, storefront bays, or vertical landscaping to break up horizontal massing of building and to create interest/variety.
- 7b:** Differentiates the sidewalk-level of the building from the middle and top portions through building articulation, projections, cornices, change in materials, etc.
- 7c:** Employs various façade treatments throughout its frontages while adhering to a cohesive and unifying design concept.
- 7d:** Differentiates building's base (first 2-5 ft. above the sidewalk) from the rest of the building's façade using material and/or color.
- 7e:** Ground- floor façades are particularly detailed through use of storefronts, storefront glazing, entryways, awnings and canopies and other design elements.
- 7f:** Creates breaks in the streetwall and divides wide store fronts into structural bays to deter large homogenous surfaces.
- 7g:** Articulates Japanese-influenced design on building facades through exposed structural support elements.
- 7h:** Mixed use and residential developments integrate balconies and terraces on street facing facades and walkways to provide building articulation and visually highlight the street.
- 7i:** Loading docks complement the same level of detail and style present in the main facility.

## GUIDELINE 8: ENTRY TREATMENTS

- 8a:** Prominently highlights one or more of the following architectural treatments at building entrances: variation in materials, lighting, awnings, textured paving, attractive signage, planters, façade treatments; projected or recessed openings; use of awnings or special signage; movable walls that open up and create more flexible interior/exterior relationships.
- 8b:** Creates inviting storefront entrances by making them the predominant architectural feature on the building façade.
- 8c:** Provides an entrance for each individual tenant or business space that is directly accessible from a public street, open space, forecourt, arcade or other identified pedestrian facility at the same grade as the sidewalk.
- 8d:** Prominently identifies pedestrian entrances in projects that have rear lot lines abutting a street, alley, or parking lot, are pedestrian entrances in addition to those on primary pedestrian-oriented corridors.
- 8e:** Clearly delineates pedestrian access paths to public entrances along vehicular and truck pathways in industrial developments.

## GUIDELINE 9: WINDOWS

- 9a:** Encourages an active and attractive pedestrian environment by providing a significant level of transparency at the ground level building facades facing public streets.
- 9b:** Allows a minimum of 90% light transmission into buildings by constructing doors and windows in clear, un-tinted and non-reflective glass, excluding architectural and decorative accents.
- 9c:** Maintains commercial displays in storefront windows while allowing maximum visibility from sidewalk to interior.
- 9d:** Includes windows on ground level of residential project.
- 9e:** Projects or recesses windows to visually differentiate from exterior facade.
- 9f:** Evenly spaces windows on ground floor apart in order to convey a discernable rhythm.
- 9g:** Screens ground floor industrial activities from street activity in industrial projects.

## GUIDELINE 10: FAÇADES, EXTERIOR SURFACE MATERIALS & COLOR

- 10a:** Incorporates three or less complementary building materials, including but not limited to glass, tile, smooth stucco or stone on exterior façade of low-and mid-rise buildings.
- 10b:** Reduce massiveness and glare impacts on surrounding uses and motorists by employing building materials that create an interesting variety of facades.
- 10c:** Uses high-quality and/or enriched materials particularly along the ground floor and at intersections, major entries, and other key locations.
- 10d:** Differentiates the ground floor from the upper stories through the use of distinct but complementary building materials, textures, colors, and window sizes.
- 10e:** Fosters a strong connection between the sidewalk and street-facing building with façade designs that are visually appealing to pedestrians.
- 10f:** Incorporates planter boxes on upper story windows and patio areas to soften the architectural façade.
- 10g:** Incorporates enhanced paved materials, such as stamped concrete, permeable surfaces, tile and/or brick areas in all paved areas, excluding parking lots and driveways.
- 10h:** Employs a harmonious color scheme that complements all adjacent structures.
- 10i:** Discourages graffiti by utilizing vertical gardens or anti-graffiti coating along wall in industrial project.

## GUIDELINE 11: CULTURAL DESIGN DETAILS

- 11a:** Expresses Japanese design aesthetics by exposing structural support elements such as exterior roof eaves, beams, posts, columns and utilizing traditional Japanese material treatments such as half-timbering on stucco surfaces.
- 11b:** Employs natural materials, particularly stone and natural finish wood.
- 11c:** Encourages fluidity and connection between interior and exterior spaces through the use of glass or light-weight translucent materials or open facades.
- 11d:** Employs simplicity as an overall design theme.

## GUIDELINE 12: LIGHTING

- 12a:** Provides lighting along all vehicular access ways and pedestrian walkways.
- 12b:** Incorporates wall-mounted fixtures into design of building to define entrances and to create a nighttime ambiance.
- 12c:** Uses illuminated signage and uses interior lighting to create a nighttime effect.
- 12d:** Illuminates landmarks and installs lighted trees along major pedestrian streets at night.
- 12e:** Locates lights in areas of pedestrian/vehicular interface and other safety areas.
- 12f:** Provides for nighttime illumination of showcases and other building interiors abutting Retail Streets at night.
- 12g:** Installs exterior lighting on street-facing building facades to provide a secondary source of sidewalk illumination.
- 12h:** Includes exterior lighting fixtures that express Japanese design motifs or complement the architectural design of the building in other ways.
- 12i:** Minimizes the impact of exterior light on neighboring development by directing the glare away from adjoining properties.
- 12j:** Incorporates circular, arch or gooseneck light fixture types.

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## GUIDELINE 13: AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

- 13a:** Size of placement of awnings and canopies enhance the building's overall frame, detailing, and rhythm.
  - 13b:** Awnings above windows are consistent in shape with the window frame.
  - 13c:** Awnings and canopies are constructed of high quality, durable, fade resistant, and fire-retardant materials.
  - 13d:** Awnings are retractable and permit sufficient light to enter store while shading merchandise and pedestrians.
- 

## GUIDELINE 14: SECURITY GRILLES

- 14a:** Employs non-barrier theft-deterrent systems if feasible OR interior security grilles or vandal-proof glazing resistant to impact.
  - 14b:** Does not use external security grilles or roll-down security grilles that conceal storefront windows.
  - 14c:** Visibility for security purposes is balanced with the screening of stored goods and industrial activities from public view. Windows with additional protection do not block out more than 30% of natural light to the interior.
- 

## GUIDELINE 15: UTILITIES, MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT, TRASH CONTAINERS & LOADING.

- 15a:** Places utility lines underground.
  - 15b:** Utility boxes or facilities are below grade along all public rights-of-way.
  - 15c:** Utilities, storage areas, trash bins, air conditioning units, fire alarms, and similar equipment are located underground or are designed to be as inconspicuous as possible.
  - 15d:** Ensures all exterior mechanical equipment, including HVAC equipment, satellite dishes and cellular antennas are not visible from the public right-of-way and are absent from window or door openings.
  - 15e:** Uses HVAC elements such as ducts and vents as opportunities for creative expression, particularly where these elements are visible to surrounding buildings.
  - 15f:** Screens rooftop mechanical equipment with materials that are architecturally integrated into the building.
- 

## GUIDELINE 16: SIDEWALK DINING ENCLOSURES

- 16a:** Employs decorative open fence enclosures that visually complement structures on the site.
- 16b:** Ensures all fences and walls abutting a public street are less than 36 inches.

## S1: GENERAL – ALL SIGNS

- S1a:** Signage is compatible in its form, proportion, scale, color, materials, surface treatment, and overall sign size with the surrounding environment.
- S1b:** Signs complement the building design with respect to style, design, materials, and colors. Signs are integrated with architectural elements, where feasible.
- S1c:** The size and location of signage are designed to respect the viewing experience of the pedestrian over those in vehicles, especially along pedestrian-oriented Retail streets.
- S1d:** Uses Japanese writing, cultural symbols, and traditional materials in project signage to reinforce the cultural character of Little Tokyo.
- S1e:** Provides a unified signage system, while incorporating a cohesive range of sign design for individual identity.

## S2: DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

- S2a:** Incorporates a bold and legible signage system at neighborhood gateways, entry points, and strategic locations within Little Tokyo.
- S2b:** Provides orientation maps, directional signs, tourist information boards, kiosks, or other way finding signage in areas of pedestrian concentration and visitor-serving uses.
- S2c:** Provides plaques at the pedestrian level to identify notable gateway and other important elements within Little Tokyo.
- S2d:** Incorporates Little Tokyo logo into all visual references to Little Tokyo such as maps, web sites, printed materials, and brochures.

## S3: PROHIBITED SIGNAGE

- S3a:** Project does not include the following prohibited signs:
  - Can Signs
  - Monument Signs
  - Pole Signs
  - Sail Signs/Wind Banners

## S4: SIGN ILLUMINATION

- S4a:** Includes reverse channel letters or externally lit individually cut letters in lieu of internally lit channel letters.

## L2: LANDSCAPING DESIGN

- L2a:** Employs landscaping design elements that reflect symbols of Little Tokyo's ethnic and cultural community, such as stone lanterns, banners, and use of natural materials.
- L2b:** Installs plant species and landscaping materials that reflect Japanese cultural character.
- L2c:** Increases the quantity of native and drought-tolerant plant species.
- L2d:** Provides effective stormwater management functions.
- L2e:** INDUSTRIAL ONLY. Incorporates a minimum 5-foot landscaped setback along the sidewalk.
- L2f:** Incorporates a high-efficiency "smart" irrigation system, which includes a weather-based controller; in-line drip and bubblers or overhead spray with low-precipitation nozzles.
- L2g:** Landscape setbacks include a 24-in. box tree every 20-ft. of street frontage, per Standard L2g guidelines.
- L2h:** Landscape setbacks, where required, include a 90-percent ground covering through the use of turf, grass, flowering plants and shrubs.

## L3: LANDSCAPING FOR PARKING LOTS AND STRUCTURES

- L3a:** Uses ground covers that provide interest and complete coverage without excessive maintenance or water usage.
- L3b:** Includes landscape buffer consisting of trees, planters, and vegetation to screen parking structures that do not have retail uses on ground floor from street frontages.
- L3c:** Includes a 5-ft. landscape buffer where surface parking abuts public right-of-way between property line and parking area. Refer to specifications stated in Standard L3c.
- L3d:** Includes landscaping on at least 7% of the lot's total surface area. Refer to specifications stated in Standard L3d.
- L3e:** Uses landscaping or special features such as wrought-iron or "art fences" to enhance parking lots or existing chain link fences.

## H1: HISTORIC STRUCTURES

- H1a:** Complies with the provisions of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings and the Historic Guidelines.

## G1: PRIMARY GATEWAYS

- G1a:** Projects at the primary gateways into Little Tokyo include features reflect the unique identity of Little Tokyo through the subtle use of certain symbols of Japanese culture and appropriate materials.