



August 13, 2025

Los Angeles City Council  
c/o Office of the City Clerk  
City Hall, Room 395  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

**REPORT ON CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN, AS PART OF  
THE BOYLE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE; CF 23-0861**

On December 12, 2023, the City Council approved the Boyle Heights Community Plan Update (BHCPU). The City Council's actions included a request that was introduced by Councilmember de Leon (Council District 14) and was approved by City Council, for the Department of City Planning to prepare a report on the possible incorporation of "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design", or CPTED strategies, and other security operational conditions in the land development review and approval process for areas adjacent to the Los Angeles River (River-Adjacent area). This report provides an analysis of CPTED in comparison to the development standards embedded within the new zoning established by the updated Boyle Heights Community Plan.

***Background***

Under the Design Out Crime<sup>1</sup> initiative launched with the City of Los Angeles in the 1990s ([Council File 94-0685](#)), a set of guidelines were created to help encourage architects, developers, and planners to consider effective ways in which design would help deter crime, and thus, increase safety. At their core, CPTED strategies include three overarching design principles:

- Natural surveillance, such as the placement of physical features, activities, and people in a way that maximizes visibility; and creating a visual connection between the residential, commercial, and publicly accessible space, such as streets, sidewalks, parking and alleys
- Natural access control, which means restricting or encouraging people to come into a space through the placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, and lighting, and

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<sup>1</sup> [Design Out Crime](#)

other features, such as centrally located common areas, or wide walking paths with adequate lighting

- Territorial enforcement and maintenance, such as the use of physical attributes to bestow ownership and separate public and private space<sup>2</sup>.

Generally, CPTED strategies encourage building designs that provide more perceived interaction between a site and its visual connection to the public right of way, all while incorporating landscaping elements, including adding fencing as barriers, as well as increased lighting, to act as deterrents to criminal activity. Incorporating these elements to make physical spaces defensible against crime have proven, over time, to reduce criminal activity and therefore increase safety.

#### Citywide Design Guidelines

LACP has made considerable progress since the 1990s in requiring a stronger, more specific set of design regulations where a project's design and building performance could be enhanced while also considering safety, ultimately deterring crime. Adopted in late 2019, the Citywide Design Guidelines already encompass CPTED strategies as part of the land development review and approval process since they contain much of the same principles of prioritizing active street frontages, creating clear pedestrian paths, and enhancing connectivity between a building and right-of-way which better activates the street, enables social interaction, creates equitable and accessible public spaces, and improves public safety by putting eyes and feet on the street<sup>3</sup>. Although not required for ministerial (by-right) projects, these guidelines apply to all new developments that seek discretionary actions and similar to CPTED, its design principles include:

- Pedestrian-First design; Promoting a safe, comfortable, and accessible pedestrian experience for all, and designing projects that actively engage with streets and public space, and maintain human scale
- 360 Degree Design, with an emphasis on; Providing amenities that support community building and provide an inviting, comfortable user experience, and carefully arranging design elements and uses to protect site users
- Climate-Adapted Design, which includes; Protecting the site's natural resources while enhancing green features and promoting more natural habitats.

Compared to CPTED strategies, the Citywide Design Guidelines emphasize much of the same approaches to design and enhanced safety, such as guidelines prioritizing the use of stairs by locating them near a building's entrance and directly on the primary paths of travel. These guidelines also encourage building design that actively engages with streets and public spaces. This is achieved by activating ground floor uses primarily along street frontages, as well as locating the required open space on the ground floor so that it is centrally located within a site, often with an unobstructed view from the public right-of-way. Similarly, new building designs using these guidelines also require elements like transparent windows facing streets as a way to maintain direct visual access.

Other Citywide Design Guideline regulations focused on increased safety include ensuring that all parking areas and pedestrian walkways be illuminated and maintaining and improving alleys with appropriate lighting and other design features, like landscaping and screening walls, in order to potentially deter criminal activities. Unlike CPTED strategies, which primarily advocate for

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<sup>2</sup> [Design Out Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Guidelines](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Citywide Design Guidelines](#)

parking at the front of a site, the Citywide Design Guidelines have evolved from a car-centric approach by encouraging placing parking at the rear to prioritize a pedestrian-first approach, in line with the BHCPU.

### ***Discussion***

#### **CPTED Strategies Reflected in the BHCPU**

The vision for the BHCPU is to build upon the community's distinctive, pedestrian friendly, traditional neighborhood character, supportive of the environmental quality, economic vitality, and urban design that promotes neighborhoods that are safe for all users. As implied in its vision, several of the land use goals and policies in the BHCPU already incorporate CPTED strategies and can be referenced in the following sections:

- **COMMUNITY CENTER AND CORRIDORS**

- **Land Use (LU) Goal 8** Ground floor spaces along corridors support community life by providing a pleasant and engaging setting

- **LU Policy 8.1** Encourage projects to dedicate ground floor space to uses that generate street level activity, such as neighborhood retail, grocery stores, restaurants, food stands, and local services
- **LU Policy 8.2** Design ground floor spaces that embrace the street and engage users by employing features such as large windows, recessed or shaded entryways, outdoor seating, and eye-level displays
- **LU Policy 8.5** Discourage the introduction of new uses on corridors that detract from a healthy and active pedestrian street life, particularly vehicle repair and servicing, businesses featuring drive-throughs, fueling stations, and storage facilities

- **URBAN FORM**

- **LU Goal 15** Buildings are designed and oriented in a manner that contributes to Boyle Heights' vibrant streets and plazas
- **LU Policy 15.1** Focus building massing and orientation along major streets, sidewalks and public spaces in order to establish a well-defined setting for street level activity and public life
- **LU Policy 15.2** Encourage building design and orientation that establishes a strong, seamless, and active streetwall
- **LU Policy 15.3** Design buildings to include features that add visual interest, such as recessed entrances, open shop front bays, arcades, columns, niches, seating, canopies, and awnings
- **LU Policy 15.4** Encourage corner plazas for buildings on corner sites in order to foster pockets of gathering and activity
- **LU Policy 15.5** Configure buildings around interior courtyards, outdoor passages (paseos), and arcades that can be seamlessly integrated with the public realm

- **LU Policy 15.6** Integrate underutilized alleys into the pedestrian network by activating frontages along alleyways and providing passage
- **LU Goal 16** Building layout and design that creates a connection between the building interior life and the public realm
  - **LU Policy 16.1** Encourage buildings to be designed with larger street facing outdoor rooms, situated partially within the mass of the building to provide a comfortable transition between the street and private interior while providing a sense of privacy
  - **LU Policy 16.2** Activate ground floor spaces and direct interior activity toward the street by locating workspaces, service counters, and seating within partial or full view of the street
- **CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**
  - **LU Goal 22** Art enriches the public realm by inviting people to connect with the cultural, historical, spiritual, and social context of the community
    - **LU Policy 22.2** Encourage mural work by local artists along blank building surfaces along alleyways and side streets
    - **LU Policy 22.3** Encourage new development to incorporate public art along building facades and in outdoor areas
    - **LU Policy 22.5** Consider opportunities for multiple forms of public art, including but not limited to seating, lighting, landscaping, shade structures, sculptures, and imagery incorporated into outdoor installations
- **PUBLIC HEALTH, WELLNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY**
  - **LU Goal 25** A Built environment that prioritizes people over cars and reduces the negative health and environmental impacts of driving while increasing physical activity and equitable access to goods and services
    - **LU 25.4** Encourage front yard design that enables residents to socialize and engage with the surrounding neighborhood
    - **LU 25.5** Enhance circulation around and within buildings through prominent entryways, open floor plans, visible stairwells, natural light, and interior communal areas that can be seamlessly integrated with the public realm
  - **LU Goal 26** New Development is designed to minimize impacts to the environment and enhance the health and wellbeing of residents
    - **LU 26.2** Encourage residential projects to orient buildings around outdoor living spaces such as a courtyard, patio, terrace, or garden that provides a connection to nature for the health and wellbeing of residents



Lighting improvement policies can also act as a way to increase safety and achieve CPTED strategies, and the following policies would also apply to the River-Adjacent area:

- **Mobility & Connectivity (MC) Goal 2:** A street network that offers a safe and pleasant environment for all users of sidewalk and the public right of way
  - **Policy 2.4:** Improve the pedestrian experience under freeway overpasses and bridges by incorporating pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and public art
- **MC Goal 3:** Alleyways are reconceived as attractive and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists to move safely and leisurely through blocks
  - **Policy 3.2:** Improve prioritized alleyways with permeable walking surfaces and streetscape amenities such as pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and public art while maintaining functionality for goods movement
- **Public Realm & Open Space Goal 1:** Parks and green spaces provide each neighborhood with scenic natural settings for recreation, relaxation and social gathering
  - **Policy 1.3:** Improve the safety, visibility and accessibility of parks and open spaces through enhanced wayfinding, handrails, pedestrian ramps, lighting at night, mobility network connections, and by ensuring that perimeters are free of obstructions like overgrown landscaping and fencing

#### Relationship to the New Zoning Code

After the adoption of the Downtown Community Plan, the BHCPU will be the second to apply the New Zoning Code, which offers revised code provisions that include unique zones and additional standards or regulations for implementation. Composed of five key districts: Form (Article 2), Frontage (Article 3), Standards (Article 4), Use (Article 5), and Density (Article 6), Frontage and Standards (or Development Standards), are where CPTED Strategies are best reflected and will apply to all projects.

Generally, Frontage Districts are unique zones that help ensure that projects respond to the public realm in a contextually appropriate manner. Specific Frontages proposed for sites within the River-Adjacent area include; General 2 (G2), Shopfront 3 (SH3), Greenway 1 (GW1), and Warehouse 1 (WH1). The following describes their design characteristics:

- General 2 (G2) Frontages require moderate to high build-to widths while allowing a wide range of modifications for pedestrian amenity spaces. These Frontage Districts have a moderate transparency requirement with flexible entrance spacing standards while ensuring a high-quality pedestrian environment and providing flexibility for a variety of ground story tenants. Specific design features include a minimum 30 percent primary and side entrance frontage planting area requirements and A2 frontage yard fence and wall types, which have a maximum three-and-a-half-foot height requirement for either hedges or fences and/or walls, so although transparent, still separates the private ground story uses and the public realm.
- Shopfront 3 (SH3) Frontages require high build-to widths, high levels of transparency, frequent entrance spacing, and ground floor elevation at-or-near sidewalk grade. This promotes a legible street wall and activates the public realm with pedestrian activity and visual interest. The at-grade ground floor elevation allows for an increased connection between the interior uses and the pedestrian space.

- Greenway 1 (GW1) is a Dual Frontage that is required to address primary, side, and special frontage lot lines, which allow for activation of the frontage lot line with increased standards. GW1 Frontages are intended for sites adjacent to parks, rivers, and open spaces. These frontages helped to ensure that any future development along the Los Angeles River continue the intent of creating open space and consistency for properties abutting the river. Special frontage lot lines are mainly proposed for sites fronting the rail lines facing the Los Angeles River and along both sides of the Sixth Street Viaduct (bridge) and Sixth Street PARC Project.
- WH1 Frontages have few standards and allow for a high level of flexibility. Typically, these Frontage Districts are designed for freight service and intended for areas where pedestrian-friendly environments are not a priority. A small portion of City-owned sites within the River-adjacent area near the intersection of Myers Street and Jesse Street include this Frontage and are already enhanced with some pedestrian improvements like lighting. Sites also facing Whittier Boulevard along the 6th Street Viaduct (bridge) between Mission Road and Boyle Avenue have the WH1 frontage also include lighting.

Development Standards specify regulations on the aesthetics of a site and include regulation requirements on features such as trees and landscaping; and site access features for pedestrians and automobiles, as well as parking. For the built environment within this area, the District 4 standards category will apply to all sites within the River-Adjacent area. With a focus on pedestrians, District 4 standards also aim to enhance circulation and access from the public realm to the interior of buildings. New construction projects as well as those seeking site modifications would require Development Review<sup>4</sup> (formerly known as Discretionary Review) and may be subject to pedestrian access, plants, fences and walls, and outdoor lighting development standards. Projects within District 4 that reflect CPTED strategies are subject to the following:

- Pedestrian Access Package 1 - intended to ensure that the buildings are highly integrated with the surrounding public realm and include frequent connections between the public realm and interior of a building. Features for site access include direct pedestrian access ways and requiring passageways for through access;
- Plant design and installation requirements - are required and shall not interfere with the visibility at intersections and driveways, with certain height requirements depending on location;
- Fences and Walls - are to be installed at all rear or side yards and for the industrial mixed use district, and shall be no more than eight feet in height;
- Outdoor Lighting and Glare - which help support a variety of environments and minimize light trespass, are required for any lot adjacent to a Special River Lot line, much like sites closest to the Los Angeles river and 6th Street Viaduct (bridge). There are also pedestrian-oriented lighting requirements for walking surface spaces for any project.

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<sup>4</sup> The intent of Development Review is to require the discretionary review of development projects when certain thresholds are met, and to allow for the variation in these thresholds appropriate to the context of development. See Article 4, Div. 4C.14 of the New Zoning Code for more information.

***Recommendations***

No additional recommendations are set forth as part of this report. The BHCPU already includes several CPTED strategies that would apply to the River-Adjacent area. The BHCPU's proposed policies are an inherent reflection of the Citywide Design Guidelines, which are an evolution of the "Design Out Crime" initiative first established in the 1990s.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Bertoni', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP  
Director of Planning

VBP:SMMB:cw:ug:ap:eg:og

