

CITY OF LONG BEACH

DOWNTOWN PLAN



January 2012

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Special Recognition

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Prepared for City of Long Beach Development Services Department
AECOM, Cityworks Design, Iteris, Strategic Economics, and ICF Jones and Stokes

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VISION + INTRODUCTION



CREATING A PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN

THE IMPORTANCE OF A DOWNTOWN PLAN

For most successful American cities, the downtown represents the symbolic center of commerce, trade, culture and social life. The area that now comprises Downtown Long Beach (Downtown) emerged when Wilmore City was incorporated in 1887. Prior to that, the area was platted into small blocks to serve a growing population that was initially attracted by agricultural opportunities. Later, the discovery and extraction of oil, the development of the Port and the ascent of Southern California's defense industry provided the economic engines for Long Beach to attain its status as one of California's largest cities (today it ranks as fifth largest in the state).

Downtown Long Beach has a relatively compact geographic footprint located atop a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It is also where the Los Angeles River and the various business activities associated with the Port of Long Beach meet the pleasure activities of the waterfront, beach and marinas. All of these factors provide both challenges and opportunities that require sound planning and design guidance as Downtown Long Beach continues to mature.

Since Downtown's inception over a hundred years ago, much has changed. In the 1960s–70s rapid suburban growth led to a reduced Downtown population and less emphasis on Downtown as the focal point of commerce and public life. More recent effects include globalized trade that brought significant changes in leading industries and job types, combined with a renewed interest in creating livable communities that are less reliant on the automobile.

As a Pacific Rim city, Long Beach has many influences economically and culturally. Downtown continues to be the hub of tourism, business and transit for the entire city. It is also home to a growing population of residents who want, within a livable urban core, convenient amenities and services. Today there are many unique features and treasures within the 1-square-mile Downtown, and when conceived as a whole, they each contribute to making Downtown and the City of Long Beach a memorable place. The Long Beach Downtown Plan (Downtown Plan) was written with a fundamental recognition of what is "quintessentially Long Beach" and seeks to guide how new private and public development can build on existing strengths and enhance the whole.



Build on Downtown Long Beach's historical roots



Downtown Long Beach is a memorable place

FIGURE 1-1

Regional Context



CREATING A PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN

There are many facets that contribute to Downtown's unique sense of place: It has a social heart (Pine Avenue and the waterfront), a civic core (Civic Center, City Hall, Courthouse), and major attractions (Convention Center, aquarium and major hotels, restaurants and beaches). It has areas with rich architectural identity (Ocean Boulevard, Villa Riviera, Willmore Historic District, East Village, Museum of Latin American Art) and areas that are emerging and redefining themselves (North Pine, Promenade). Importantly, most of Downtown's treasures are a short walk from each other; they would not be as meaningful on their own, or if they were located in another part of Long Beach.

Any vision of the future must respect Downtown's rich architectural legacy, which includes outstanding building examples of Art Deco, Streamline Moderne and Spanish International Style, as well as other styles. To make Downtown Long Beach a more complete place, this Plan strives to enhance what is currently great and to encourage even greater contributions from all new development. The Plan is therefore predicated on the preservation of historic structures and the introduction of new innovative buildings—both are essential to a thriving metropolis.

As a magnet for investment, office and residential towers, and civic institutions, Downtown will always experience more large-scale development activity than the City's surrounding residential neighborhoods. However, because of the magnitude of that financial investment, and the desire to attract jobs and businesses, it is vital that Long Beach keep current a plan describing what is wanted for Downtown today and in the future.

Some have felt that the fast pace of development funding and construction in Long Beach and all across the West Coast, over the last 10 years, resulted in a reactive planning process. This Downtown Plan encourages a proactive planning process with developers and institutions. This proactive process is critical for Long Beach to be well positioned when the pace of design and construction activity increases. In recent years, the approach used for the Downtown Plan has become known as a "form-based code." This means the focus is on the design and character of the building and how it contributes to defining and activating the nearby public realm. Less focus is on traditional regulation characterized by a list of uses permitted or not permitted within the building. Having such an adopted plan may make Downtown Long Beach more attractive to developers, who can see, clearly codified, what the residents and stakeholders want, what they see as good design, and more importantly what is right for Downtown, a key component of the larger City.



Enhance what is great



Retain the architectural legacy

CREATING A PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN



Thirteen posters were created during the Downtown visioning process

THE VISIONING PROCESS

The roots of this document were formed in a highly social “visioning process” that began in 2006 with the volunteer efforts of a Visioning Committee and input received through public workshops. This initial process resulted in a message that combined words and imagery to convey what the future might look like. This visioning provided a necessary foundation for the Downtown Plan and, as a reference to that important foundational work, some of these images are included throughout this chapter. Going forward, the document will exist as the formal policy document to be used by City Staff on a daily basis to (1) keep true to the community’s vision, and (2) provide specific standards and guidelines to reference when working with developers.

The more specific content of this Plan was developed with the contributions of a Downtown Steering Committee. Their mission was to advise Staff and the design consultants as the Plan evolved, to provide continuity with the prior visioning process, progress the thinking on focused topics through subcommittees, and to review and comment on draft versions of the document. A public workshop attended by Downtown residents and stakeholders provided additional insights and suggestions that were critical to the text and graphic content.

Today’s Economic Forces

In conjunction with the Plan, a market analysis of the greater Downtown Long Beach area was prepared for the Redevelopment Agency to evaluate both current conditions and projections for the future buildout. While the pace of Downtown development, as well as



Input received at public workshops

CREATING A PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN



Steering Committee examined height standards on bus tour

development elsewhere, will continue to be impacted by economic cycles, the study concluded that the addition of new housing and the increase in resident population will continue to attract new jobs. The new residents and Downtown employees will increase support for retail businesses. Overall, there are substantive reasons to be optimistic about Downtown's future.

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As the City embarks on a sustainable path to the future, a *Sustainable City Action Plan* has been adopted that establishes initiatives and goals that will guide future operational and policy decisions for buildings and neighborhoods, energy, transportation, urban nature, waste reduction and water usage. For all issues sustainability seeks consider the environmental, social, and economic components and to maximize benefit with the smallest negative impact.

The Downtown Plan addresses the issues of sustainable design at the most fundamental level of planning and design. These standards reinforce a land use and transportation relationship that supports transit-oriented development nearest the Metro Blue Line stations, walkable streets, a bicycle-friendly environment, and mix of jobs, housing and amenities within a vibrant urban center. Encouraging a balance of transportation modes through good planning, design and development will effectively reduce vehicle miles travelled within Long Beach and, in turn, reduce vehicle emissions that contribute the greatest share of our region's greenhouse gases.



THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

VISIONING STATEMENT

Long Beach is a WATERFRONT METROPOLIS with a feel for the past and anticipation for the future. We are a model of international living and distinguish ourselves through a unique vision: progressive, diverse, cultured. Fueled by a vibrant City center, Long Beach is a place where residents are proud to live, work, and play.



With this clear vision and lofty but attainable goals, Downtown Long Beach is positioned to remain a model for metropolitan growth and a location of international importance. In achieving that model, the Downtown Plan acts as a comprehensive spatial development plan to implement strategies that both preserve and enhance the ideals that have contributed to Downtown’s successes while seamlessly instilling new principles of sound urban development. Such strategies will keep Downtown home to the highest concentrations of residential and economic activity in the City, as well as the hub of arts and culture. Long Beach is a place where residents are proud to live, work, and play, and the Downtown Plan is designed to shape the future development of this vibrant City center in a way that is both visionary and sustainable.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Visioning Committee also developed a set of nine guiding principles, which are meant to shape the outcome during the Downtown Plan’s implementation. These represent the culmination of the visioning and outreach process and also serve as a basis of the Plan.



Major attractions are adjacent to Downtown

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

WHAT WILL BE THE OUTCOME?

In the near term, a number of projects are underway that promote the principle of improving Downtown's public realm infrastructure. For example, the Pine Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project between Shoreline Drive and 8th Street will contribute to the ongoing betterment of walkability and connectivity. Similarly, the completion of the Metro Blue Line Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan will assist in acquiring funding to realize a range of improvements that will encourage bicycling and walking to all the Metro Blue Line Stations.

The Guiding Principles described on this page and the development standards and incentives contained in this Downtown Plan aim to create a world-class City center, and a vibrant and energetic Downtown that will be home to a diverse mix of people, businesses, and attractions. The Plan will provide for more and expanded urban choices for living, working, and shopping in the Downtown in a true mixed-use City center. The Plan will ensure that Long Beach remains highly livable, with interconnected open space and transit, and a range of community services and cultural opportunities.

Achieving a high-quality urban realm, bold architecture, and a progressive global city requires a plan that both regulates and stimulates future development. The Downtown Plan provides development standards and guidelines that establish the critical components for future development, while promoting design creativity as a real estate market catalyst. Specifically, the goals of the Plan include the following outcomes:



Development is balanced with open space

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH

- 1 We promote the development of a **DISTINCTIVE DOWNTOWN SKYLINE**, providing a vibrant, compact city core attracting cosmopolitan and creative people.
- 2 Our lively Downtown acts as the **HEART OF THE CITY**, connecting with the neighborhoods and coastline.
- 3 We encourage an **INFRASTRUCTURE** to accommodate a future that is less dependent on fossil fuels and more focused on walking, bicycling, and public transportation.
- 4 We invite and support new industries to invest in our future so that we can continue to **DIVERSIFY OUR ECONOMY** and promote job growth while strengthening our existing backbone of convention, tourism, and port business.
- 5 We endorse **BOLD ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING, AND CONSTRUCTION** that utilize green building technology and incorporate sustainable energy.
- 6 We demand **QUALITY** in building practices in order to ultimately create historical masterpieces.
- 7 We value our buildings of **HISTORIC** merit and seek to preserve or restore them through adaptive reuse.
- 8 We include the best aspects of an innovative **GLOBAL CITY**: dynamic architecture, light-filled public spaces, active recreation, celebration of our unique culture, and respect for the natural environment.
- 9 We work together to ensure the **SUCCESS** of this vision and it is our promise to the City and its residents to invest in the future.

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

DESTINATION DOWNTOWN

A Citywide multi-modal transportation network reinforces the role of Downtown as the focal point of the City.

- 1 *Embrace a “park once” philosophy in the Downtown, stressing the utilization of Downtown’s existing surplus of public parking and a renewed emphasis on shared use of parking facilities.*
- 2 *Facilitate walkability using initiatives such as the recent Pine Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project as a model for other pedestrian right-of-way enhancements in Downtown.*
- 3 *Strengthen connectivity between Downtown and areas south of Pine Avenue, such as the convention center, The Pike, Shoreline Village, and the Alamitos Beach bike path, to attract visitors to and from the waterfront.*
- 4 *Introduce standards that allow for future transit innovation—such as the reintroduction of the streetcar—and the necessary infrastructure improvements that would lend to its success.*
- 5 *Encourage high-density, transit-oriented development near existing Blue Line corridors to maximize usage of existing transit systems and support their success through regulations aimed at improved streetscape and building design along routes.*
- 6 *Uphold the title of The Most Bicycle Friendly City in America through the enhancement of existing bicycle amenities, such as the Bikestation; building on the successes of Downtown’s dedicated 3rd Street and Broadway bicycle lanes; and integrating the Downtown’s bicycle-friendly roads and bikeways with the City’s greater bicycle path network.*

Enhanced Mobility

The vision for Downtown reflects the City’s forward-thinking, unified approach toward alternative transportation methods that operate with efficiency, directness, and speed. This marks a deliberate departure from antiquated suburban models that focus almost exclusively on maximizing the efficiency of vehicular movement and vehicular parking. Once in Downtown, visitors, residents, and employees will enjoy engaging, clean, and safe pedestrian environments, including paseos, pedestrian-oriented lighting, and sidewalks connecting all of the amenities and excitement of a vibrant urban environment. A walkable Downtown is a successful Downtown.

This renewed commitment to improved mobility in Downtown incorporates improvements integrated into the street systems, including upgraded transit and Blue Line facilities; an increase in the number of interlinked bicycle pathways and related accommodations, such as the existing Bikestation; and pedestrian-oriented amenities. Together they will make Downtown a more welcoming environment, regardless of one’s chosen means of travel.

Additionally, a fully balanced multi-modal system can provide benefits beyond transportation. Where implemented, there are typically increases in economic and business activity and recreational opportunities, and increased support—and accompanying demand—for social and cultural institutions. Bicycle and pedestrian travel causes virtually no air or noise pollution and, as a by-product, improves the health of Downtown.



Dedicated bike paths improve rider safety

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

A successful downtown is a destination. This is especially true for Long Beach, with its coveted waterfront location and wide range of land uses that draw workers, residents, and visitors into its Downtown. To facilitate the convenient and efficient exploration of Downtown attractions, connectivity between destinations—and the means of such—is a critical outcome of the Plan.

Downtown Long Beach will function as a hub of activity accessible to all through an interconnected transportation network that extends far beyond its borders. Enhanced Blue Line and transit stops will create a welcoming entrance into Downtown, and the reintroduction of the streetcar system may add a appealing, yet efficient, means of traversing through the area's increasingly revitalized corridors. For those who prefer non-motorized transport, enhanced streetscapes—complete with the ample, necessary amenities to make them an attractive, viable option—will provide attractive and safe grounds for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Interconnected Pedestrian Space

The Downtown Plan identifies standards and guidelines for an interconnected pedestrian network of open spaces, urban parks, plazas, community gardens, courtyards, and paseos. These resources within Downtown offer a range of recreational opportunities and amenities, in addition to their valuable role as a natural aesthetic. The Plan places great importance on streetscape design, a critical aspect of the City's public realm. Quality streetscape design and availability of usable open spaces provide respites from the frenzy of urban life in Downtown, offering places to read, reflect and recharge, or meet and chat with friends and colleagues. In addition to open space requirements contained within the Plan, the City will continue to pursue development opportunities for public open space



Enhanced stations make transit use more comfortable



Multi-modal systems give community members greater choices

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

in the form of pocket parks, dog parks, and other types of facilities, knitting together an interconnected network of open spaces serving all types of users and offering open space in all neighborhoods of Downtown.

Whether public or private, fully accessible and inviting open spaces are essential to the health and vibrancy of any downtown. It is perhaps from these open spaces that the scale, architecture, and character of the urban realm are best experienced. The interconnected open space network of urban parks, plazas, community gardens, courtyards, and paseos provide pedestrians direct contact with aesthetically pleasing natural features and a path of efficient travel to nearby amenities. A careful, coordinated design of these open space corridors will serve to create safe and suitable walking areas that enhance livability and create a more rewarding Downtown experience.

Quality Urban Architecture

From both land and sea, the Downtown Long Beach skyline creates a dramatic impression and a statement about the importance of Downtown. Each new building must be a positive addition to this skyline. By incorporating standards and guidelines for site and building design, the Downtown Plan establishes minimum thresholds of quality but allows flexibility by focusing on key elements of design and character of new structures, allowing the marketplace to dictate the details of form and use. This allows for bold new ideas and timeless design principles to shine through and add interest and vitality to the Long Beach skyline over time.

Well-designed buildings are the “building blocks” of great streets and neighborhoods. Good design typically results from projects that are conceived in their total with a “big design idea,” and respond sensitively to their immediate



Successful open space can be either formal or informal

THE CASE FOR PEDESTRIANS

A walkable Downtown is the cornerstone of a successful urban environment, a proven generator of economic growth, healthier living, and overall sustainability.

- 1 *Promote dense, mixed-use developments that encourage pedestrian travel for access to goods, services, and entertainment.*
- 2 *Emphasize pedestrian safety improvements such as the installation of decorative street lighting, pedestrian crossings, and bulb-outs—such as those recently installed in the Downtown’s East Village—to calm automotive traffic.*
- 3 *Continue parkway landscaping efforts along Downtown streets to create a more attractive, inviting pedestrian realm.*
- 4 *Create plazas, paseos, and walkways that interconnect various Downtown attractions and facilitate pedestrian activity.*
- 5 *Explore pedestrian linkages between Downtown and Alamitos Beach, the City’s largest public open space.*
- 6 *Support residents and visitors with pets with “clean solution” stations and appropriately designed animal-oriented spaces such as K-9 Corner and Downtown Dog Park.*



Open spaces large and small activate Downtown

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

context while artfully solving the programmatic needs of the owner and building users. This should also be evident at the finer levels of execution—like the selection of materials, windows, doors, details, and the landscaping palette, where all elements combine to realize a larger architectural composition. Additionally, good building design includes active street-level uses with human-scale design features that will enhance the experience of moving through Downtown at street level and contribute to a high level of pedestrian activity.

A world-class Downtown, featuring innovative high-quality design, will attract a new class of commercial and office development and tenants, and more visitors, and contribute to the quality of the urban realm. From human-scale building frontages at the street level to distant views of its balanced, signature skyline, Downtown residents and visitors will continue to see an urban environment characterized by a sensitive blending of carefully preserved older structures, high-quality new construction, architectural gems, and engaging public spaces.



Bold ideas and timeless design principles

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Building design shall contribute not only to immediate site surroundings, but also enhance the overall Downtown aesthetic.

- 1 *New development shall be designed in such a way as to blend into the overall context of neighboring structures, particularly those with historic significance.*
- 2 *Ensure that the “public realm” of the street is consistent on Downtown’s most identifiable corridors by enforcing minimum building heights.*
- 3 *Require human-scale building frontages—particularly at street level—that appear open and inviting to the public and contain appropriate pedestrian amenities.*
- 4 *Preserve existing view corridors and natural light passages when considering taller structures, and hold new high-rise buildings to the highest standards of design to maintain the Downtown’s legacy of well-detailed, crafted, and timeless buildings.*
- 5 *Create a transition in bulk and scale to maintain a quality and balanced skyline. Enhance new development with significant landscaping, both on-site and within the abutting public right-of-way. Enforce design standards that encourage innovation and design of high-quality architecture and urban form.*
- 6 *Ensure that the individual design elements all contribute in a meaningful way to a complete, coherent design vision.*



THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Sustainability

Continuing the City's forward-thinking approach toward sustainable design and development, the Plan advances a number of goals aimed at preserving the area's natural elements and lowering the ecological footprint of Downtown. The Citywide Sustainable City Action Plan and the green building policy is augmented in the Downtown Plan by development incentives. These are provided for projects that include LEED certification or equivalent, green roofs, use of renewable energy, public open space in excess of the standards, and rehabilitation of historic structures. The Plan's focus on linking density to transit significantly reduces automobile emission levels and lowers the Downtown's heat island effect. These future-oriented policies will specifically direct the City toward more environmentally friendly forms of development and community building.

As home to the highest concentrations of development in Long Beach, Downtown will continue to uphold the City's efforts at being a national leader in the sustainability movement. Quality transit-oriented projects will line upgraded, user-friendly Blue Line and bus routes, and the current infrastructure catering primarily to private automobile access into and around Downtown will be augmented by an upgraded system of bicycle and pedestrian amenities. Together with the implementation of various City policies and regulations aimed at "greening" Downtown, this will help ensure a cleaner, healthier Downtown of the future.



SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

A commitment to sustainable practices in both public and private spaces will ensure a healthy, more livable Downtown for future generations.

- 1 *Continue Long Beach's proactive approach to environmental issues by adopting standards that support the existing Sustainable City Action Plan, Green Building Development Standards, Water-Efficient Landscaping Ordinance, and the Low Impact Development Ordinance.*
- 2 *Encourage LEED Certified Silver or higher on all new Downtown developments.*
- 3 *Increase the greening of Downtown through right-of-way landscaping enhancements, public parks, and vegetated pathways linking streets with public and private open spaces, such as linkages connecting The Promenade and Pine Avenue.*
- 4 *Incorporate sustainable construction techniques into infrastructure projects to reduce long-term project impacts.*
- 5 *Implement public right-of-way enhancements such as energy-efficient street lights/signs and other amenities.*
- 6 *Support the emergence of Downtown as a center of green jobs through various education and job promotion campaigns.*
- 7 *Continue promotion of alternative transportation as a means to, from, and within Downtown.*



THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Activities and Events – Enrichment of Arts and Culture

From summer concerts to trade shows and conventions to a myriad of special events, Downtown truly personifies the heart of the City. Aided by a temperate coastal climate, hundreds of events each year, including community gatherings of all types, art walks, street performances, and festivals, attract visitors from near and far. Art installations and window displays, exterior lighting of buildings, and other similar features create a truly unique urban environment, bringing newcomers and regulars back to Downtown to enjoy their leisure time and the unique architecture and character.

With no other South Bay location boasting such a large mix and concentration of activities and events, Downtown Long Beach is a highly popular regional destination. The Downtown Plan strives to expand this level of activity, encouraging the enrichment of the Downtown environment through the ongoing promotion of large, annual events—running the gamut from athletic competitions (the Long Beach Grand Prix and Long Beach Marathon) to street parades and concerts (the Long Beach Gay & Lesbian Pride celebration, Summer And Music [SAM])—as well as those with a more local flavor, such as the East Village Art District’s monthly Art Walk and the weekly Downtown Farmer’s Market. The continued hosting of these events and supporting venues for new events provide an immeasurable opportunity to showcase the spirit and character of Downtown.

A diverse collection of recreational opportunities for residents, visitors, and tourists are readily available within Downtown. From the hosting of large conferences to the continued scheduling of a diverse range of musical and cultural events, Downtown will cater to the interests of all segments of society. Creative art and performance spaces will see their numbers grow, increasing the Downtown’s status as a hub of culture and nightlife. Downtown will be an arts destination for visitors and home to many of America’s top writers and visual and performing artists. The Downtown Plan will implement strategies to make this vision a reality.

THE ROLE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN DOWNTOWN

Drawing both visitors and local residents, a wide range of entertainment options are critical to the vitality of Downtown.

- 1 *Maintain the City’s partnership with the Downtown Long Beach Associates, Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, and other Downtown stakeholders to continue the promotion of visitor-service attractions.*
- 2 *Continue to pursue events of national and international interest, such as the hosting of the TED Conference.*
- 3 *Maintain a streamlined process for Downtown special event application review.*
- 4 *Foster development strategies that bolster the East Village’s standing as a regional hub of creativity, and encourage creative spaces, such as the recent Art Exchange project and 4th + Linden design studios, within the district.*
- 5 *Seek to establish suitable Downtown performance spaces as new trends in art and entertainment present themselves.*
- 6 *Program evening events that encourage Downtown businesses to extend their operating hours.*



Unique events draw people from near and far

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

A Respect for History

Downtown Long Beach has a fine collection of older structures that are associated with the people, events, and history of the City. These buildings are the tangible roots of communal memories, reminding residents and visitors of where the City has come from and how it has grown. Preserving examples of historic buildings keeps intact the connection between the past, present, and future. Many of these historic buildings are architecturally significant for their materials, design, construction, ornament, and craftsmanship. Because of their unique urban character, they visually enrich our urban experience and can provide property owners with tangible benefits. In competitive real estate markets, well maintained historic buildings often have a special marketing edge.

Understanding the enriching value of these character-defining resources, the Plan complements the greater Long Beach goal of preservation and protection through adaptive reuse strategies and regulations that require future developments to be designed in a manner that harmoniously strengthens the present Downtown fabric. Important incentives for historic preservation are available at the federal and state level. Federal programs include the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, which creates tax credits, and the Preservation



HISTORIC CHARACTER

A key component of the Downtown character derives from the presence of structures from the turn of the century. Integrating modern structures with those of historic significance will positively reflect Downtown's continuing urbanization progress.

- 1 *Facilitate the reinvention of historically significant structures and incentivize—through density waivers, parking reductions, and other means—adaptive reuse possibilities, as seen in the Kress Lofts, Insurance Exchange, and Walker Building projects.*
- 2 *Require development on Downtown sites in proximity to structures of historic significance to be designed harmoniously with the existing building's historic character.*
- 3 *Create a more streamlined Certificate of Appropriateness process for small-scale modifications to existing historically significant structures.*
- 4 *Create opportunities to educate and promote Downtown and the adjacent waterfront's historic past.*



Encourage new uses for older buildings

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Easements Program, which creates charitable tax deductions. State programs include the 2007 California Historic Building Code, and the Uniform Code for Building Conservation which deal with the unique building construction and safety issues inherent in historic buildings, and the Mills Act Program, which provides for reductions in property taxes for qualified historic buildings.

A careful blending of both old and new will add to the rich history of Downtown. The emphasis on adaptive reuse will see older buildings reinvented in ways that pay homage to their past while renewing their status as destinations and places of interest.

Supporting Infrastructure

As one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City, Downtown faces the challenge of balancing the increasing flow of daily activity with the ever-present needs of an older infrastructure network. Ongoing maintenance and repair of streets, sidewalks, utilities, and communication systems remain a top priority, as well as the continued, successful collaboration between the City and service agencies, who, together, will lay the foundation for Downtown's continued vitality and success.

Downtown's future will consist of street improvements to make the area more readily accessible to both pedestrians and bicyclists. Enhanced sidewalks and connectivity via landscaped and amenity-rich paseos will connect points of interests in a way that will encourage a "park once" approach, encouraging visitors to walk to multiple Downtown destinations. Improved interface between buildings and their adjoining streetscapes will create an enjoyable, safe pedestrian environment that will act as a catalyst for the growth of Downtown's retail and restaurant sector.









INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS AS DEVELOPMENT CATALYST

Properly functioning infrastructure is a proven catalyst for a successful, dynamic Downtown. Improvements in this realm will serve to increase the efficient movement of goods and people, and serve to support future development.

- 1 *Ensure that future street improvements cater to all modes of transportation, not simply automobiles.*
- 2 *Require infrastructure improvements, when necessary, as conditions of future development approvals.*
- 3 *Support the development of Downtown passenger terminals that serve two or more travel modes, such as the proximity of existing Blue Line stops, Downtown's First Street Transit Mall, and the BikeStation.*
- 4 *Provide clear and attractive wayfinding signage to and within Downtown.*
- 5 *Explore the potential for a free wireless network throughout Downtown.*
- 6 *Enhance the appearance, functionality, and safety of sidewalks and other pedestrian spaces.*

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Understanding The Planning Document Hierarchy For Downtown Long Beach

Level of Plan	Physical Extent	Scale & Specificity
<p>Planning Policy Framework</p> <p>Providing policy initiatives and planning requirements</p> <p>Examples: National, State, and Regional (SCAG, SCAQMD) Regulations, Policies, and Plans</p> <p>Citywide Plans</p> <p>Goals and policies for future land-use decisions (guide for future development); Provides vision and guidance, but does not regulate land-use; Integrates a multitude of concepts such as sustainability, healthy living initiatives, economic development, and provides overarching comprehensive vision, or provides guidance for a particular topic citywide</p> <p>Examples: General Plan Update (Long Beach 2030), Long Beach Strategic Plan 2010, Bikeway Master Plan, Capital Improvement Plan (Infrastructure Master Plan)</p>		<p>More Conceptual-Based/Long Vision Planning</p> 
<p>Conceptual Area Plans</p> <p>Geographically focused plans which address relevant topics pertinent for specific areas; Provides vision, guidance and intended outcomes through guidelines, but doesn't regulate land-use</p> <p>Examples: Downtown Vision Statement, Strategic Guides For Development For Central and Downtown Redevelopment Project Areas, Streetscape Enhancement Master Plan, Downtown Retail Vision</p>		<p>Regulatory</p>
<p>Community Plan/PD/Zoning</p> <p>Consistent with and systematically implements vision or conceptual documents for a particular area and/or topic; Implementation through zoning regulation, and enforceable development standards, does regulate land-use, setbacks, height, density, and other development standards</p> <p>Examples: Downtown Community Plan, Local Coastal Plan (Implementation Measures) PD-6 Downtown Shoreline</p>		<p>Regulatory</p>
<p>Implementation/Improvement Plans</p> <p>Detailed construction-level projects, plans, and local implementation strategies</p> <p>Examples: Pine Ave. Streetscape Project, East Village Arts District Guide For Development, BlueLine Pedestrian/Bike Access Plan, 3rd Street & Broadway Bicycle Plan, Downtown Long Beach Area Retail Implementation Strategy</p>		<p>Project</p> <p>More Detailed/ Near-Term Projects</p> 

Composite

A coordinated series of plans at various scales to guide development and infrastructure priorities, create great streets, and enhance neighborhoods and foster vibrant communities



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The City's broadest reaching plan document is its General Plan; the forthcoming *Long Beach 2030 Plan*. Other documents that supplement the General Plan and provide broad guidance for all areas of the City are documents like the *Sustainable City Action Plan* and the *Bicycle Master Plan*.

Second in the hierarchy of regulating documents are Specific Plans. **This Downtown Plan is not a Specific Plan, but will provide very localized guidance and standards for new development.**

Third, and representing the greatest level of specificity, are Improvement Plans. For Downtown Long Beach, these would include the *Pine Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project*, *East Village Arts District Guide for Development*, and the *Metro Blue Line Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan*. These documents must remain consistent with the principles of the Downtown Plan but provide very detailed design and implementation plans for improvements that will be realized in the near term.

Section 1 – The Vision and Introduction provides the context for the Downtown Plan, clarifies its relation to other guiding documents, describes its outgrowth from a visioning process, and articulates the expected outcomes..

Section 2 – Connectivity and Character describes the multimodal transportation facilities that will serve Downtown and how the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular components all work together. It also describes important neighborhoods and character areas adjacent to and within Downtown.

Section 3 – Development Standards defines acceptable uses and envelopes for development, density, parking, building height and setbacks. These standards essentially define the developable envelope and are intended to both regulate and stimulate development.

Section 4 – Design Standards focuses on urban design and architecture to achieve pedestrian-friendly development and to foster buildings that are “good neighbors” making a significant design contribution to their block, street and neighborhood.

Section 5 – Streetscape and Public Realm Standards provides more specific criteria for the design of streetscape, street trees, planting, hardscape, site furnishings, lighting, open space and public art.

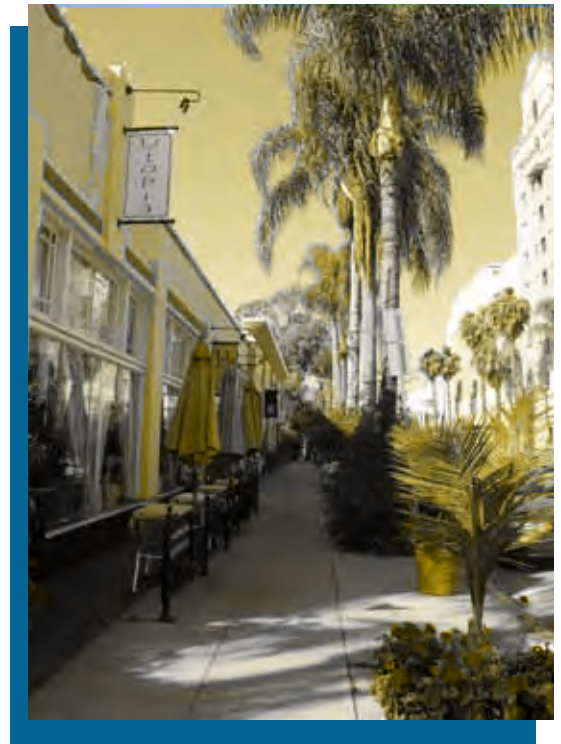
Section 6 – Sign Standards provides overall guidance in the design of commercial, residential and temporary signs.

Section 7 – Historic Preservation encourages adaptive reuse, treatment of landmark buildings, incentives.

Section 8 – Plan Administration clarifies the development approval process, procedures and environmental review assumptions of the Program EIR.

2

CHARACTER+CONNECTIVITY



CHARACTER

DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREAS

Within the Downtown, there are a number of “character areas,” which are discussed throughout the Downtown Plan. These areas have evolved over time, so that each has a unique feel and unique attributes that should be strengthened through new development and rehabilitation. The Downtown character areas are discussed on the following pages, and their locations are generally identified in Figure 2-1.

CIVIC CENTER

This area includes the Civic Center, public library, and Lincoln Park. It is a primary icon and gathering area within the City.



BUSINESS AND ENTERTAINMENT AREA

Downtown is the heart of Long Beach and the site of much development in the recent past. It is the business, retail, and tourism hub of the City, and also the home of many of the City’s historic and cultural treasures. It is characterized by tall buildings; high vehicular, pedestrian, and transit traffic; and diverse building sizes and uses.



CHARACTER

WILLMORE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The northern portion of the Plan area includes parts of the Willmore City/Drake Park historic district, which features residences of the early 1900s and pleasant tree-lined streets.



EAST VILLAGE

East Village is the center of local arts and culture in the City. The eclectic neighborhood boasts a collection of privately owned businesses, galleries, shops, and a complementary street experience. Its nostalgic charm and diversity of uses attract both tourists and locals.



WEST END

The West End is located at the west side of Downtown, east of the I-710 freeway and Cesar Chavez Park. This district is defined by low-rise, single- and multi-family residential uses, and neighborhood amenities like churches and schools. This district represents the traditional neighborhoods with walkable streets and diverse housing types that characterize much of the City.



NORTH PINE

This area includes the northern portion of Pine Street, which has more neighborhood character than within the Downtown core. It also includes a variety of housing types, including multi-family buildings and condominiums.



FIGURE 2-1

Character Areas and Surrounding Neighborhoods



CHARACTER

SURROUNDING CONTEXT

While the development and design standards in Chapters 3 and 4 outline specific requirements for new development, new projects must also respond to the context of their setting and contribute to Downtown in a meaningful way. It's important to recognize that Downtown is actually a collection of neighborhoods and areas of distinct character that make it memorable. This Plan requires buildings to respond to their surrounding neighborhood and the character of their street and block with an urban design approach that is coherent, and a stylistic approach that balances innovation with architectural sensibility. Adjacent to the Downtown Plan study area are other notable neighborhoods in Long Beach that influence the character of the area.

Waterfront

The Long Beach waterfront is located to the south of the study area, defined by Ocean Boulevard as the boundary. The waterfront includes cultural, tourist and recreation attractions like the performing arts center, convention center, aquarium, and The Pike and Rainbow Harbor. These are linked by abundant public transportation. Much of the former industrial waterfront to the west has been transformed into business park uses.

Residential Neighborhoods

Residential neighborhoods surround the remainder of Downtown. To the east is Bluff Park and Alamitos Beach, an area of stately, oceanfront homes and mid-rise condominium buildings. The neighborhoods of Hellman and St. Mary's are located to the northeast, which are both traditional neighborhoods with Craftsman homes and other neighborhood uses. St. Mary's Medical Center is located within this community. North of Downtown are Drake Park and Willmore City, which together form a Historic District known for early 1900s residences.



CONNECTIVITY



THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTIVITY

The successful downtown is a destination. This is especially true for Long Beach with its unique waterfront location and its mix of uses that draw workers, residents, and visitors to the area and encourages them to move about and explore the different neighborhoods of Downtown. Conveniently and efficiently exploring the different areas of Downtown requires that they be interconnected in multiple ways, providing multiple choices as to how to move around and through the area.

The connectivity and mobility vision for Downtown is forward thinking and deliberately moves away from the typical suburban model and some of the downtown models that focused almost exclusively on maximizing the efficiency of vehicular movement and vehicular parking. The visioning process concluded that a dense, vibrant downtown could not be achieved by focusing on the automobile for moving people into and around the area. The Downtown mobility network must be a balanced network that provides transit as a viable alternative to the automobile, includes bicycle facilities integrated into the street system, and safe and engaging pedestrian corridors.

A fully balanced multi-modal mobility system has benefits beyond transportation. Where implemented there is typically increased economic and business activity, recreation, and increased support for social and cultural institutions. By providing appropriate and well-designed spaces for bicycles and pedestrians, the overall quality of life is elevated encouraging even more investment in quality development.

The vision of a balanced mobility network does not suggest that the network does not have priorities. The highest priority is on walking as the mode for moving within Downtown. This is followed by bicycles, the various forms of transit, and then vehicles.



CONNECTIVITY



The network in Downtown Long Beach consists of a combination of highways, streets, transit, and the pedestrian realm. Primary surface streets, regional and interstate highways, and major transit connectors all lead to Downtown. This access positions Long Beach as a regional hub, with connections to Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange County, nearby ports, and other regional destinations in Southern California. This network is illustrated in Figure 2-2.

Walkable streets and accessible transit are a crucial ingredient for a vibrant, multi-use community. Streets are the heart of the public realm and should accommodate a wide range of inhabitants beyond vehicles. The goal of the Downtown Plan is to restore the streets as places of community association and shared transportation, as it was historically in Long Beach.

DOWNTOWN STREETS

A number of important City thoroughfares converge in Downtown Long Beach. The streets are primarily in a grid with occasional diagonal streets, and a variety of types, sizes, character, and capacity.

Key Streets

Key streets in Downtown are either significant for being major thoroughfares or retail corridors, or because they provide iconic character and recognizable centers for neighborhood districts. Key mobility streets are illustrated in Figure 2-2.

Major streets provide direct regional access to and from the Downtown core. They are generally wide, with multiple lanes, are accessible to highways, and carry high traffic volumes. Most of them are consistent with the grid. Others—like Alamitos and Ocean Boulevard—deviate from the grid to channel traffic to specific destinations and are important gateways into Downtown. These streets are shared by personal vehicles, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians, often as important retail corridors. Major streets create the form of the City and help to distinguish unique communities therein.

CONNECTIVITY

The regulations and guidelines presented in this plan will realize the goals put forth by the Guiding Principles. Below are visual representations of what some character areas can resemble once these new policies and guidelines are implemented.



LONG BEACH BLVD

In the Downtown core, high-quality design should incorporate modern, innovative architectural solutions, a higher minimum streetwall, and taller buildings in the transit-oriented areas.



WEST END

Architectural design standards west of the Downtown core should promote high-quality residential development with a minimum streetwall, landscaped setbacks, parkways, and street trees to enhance the pedestrian environment.



EAST VILLAGE

East of the Downtown core, architectural design should promote high-quality mixed-use development with pedestrian-oriented ground floors.

CONNECTIVITY



Overall Guidelines for Walkability:

1. *Strengthen existing pedestrian connections and streetscapes where possible, through the use of lighting, street furniture, landscape, and signage.*
2. *Incorporate mid-block connections, paseos, or small plaza spaces to enhance the pedestrian realm, and provide pedestrian gathering places and stopping points.*
3. *Provide pedestrian-oriented uses and pocket parks along pedestrian zones to encourage “eyes on the street” and active uses.*

Other streets, such as Pine Avenue, Ocean Boulevard, Linden Avenue, and Alamitos Avenue, contribute to distinct characters within the City. These streets offer great pedestrian activity because of a predominance of ground-floor retail, public spaces, and other places of interest. Many of these streets are found Downtown, as it is the center of culture and identity.

Neighborhood Streets

Neighborhood streets complete the street network, composing the neighborhoods and city fabric and connecting the major streets. They are typically narrower; post slower speeds; and allow for a greater commingling of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles than primary streets.

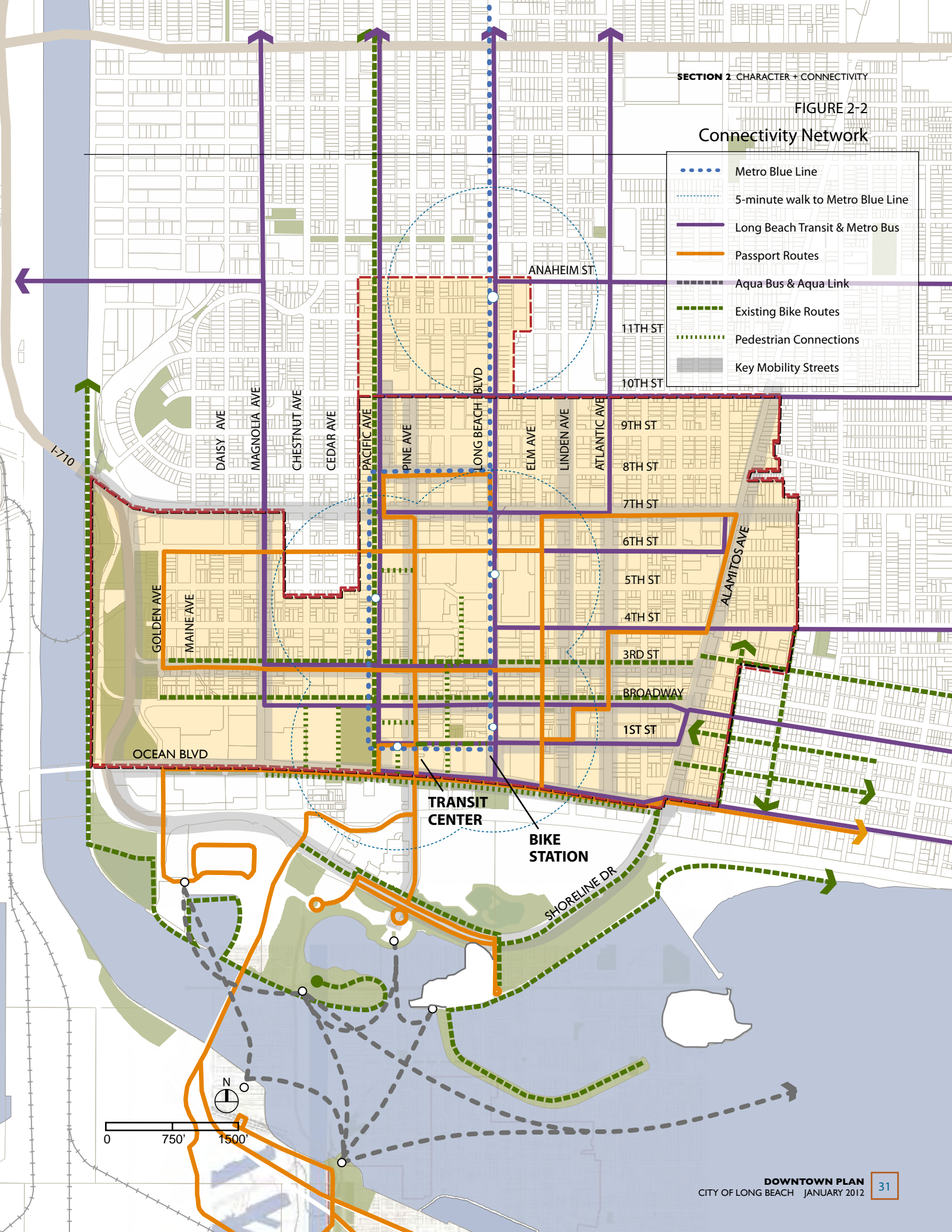
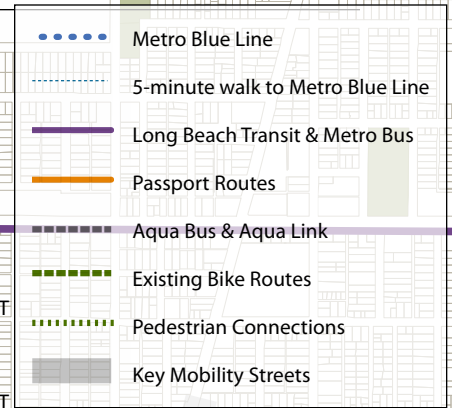
PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

In several spaces, the public right-of-way is reserved for pedestrians, most notably the Promenade, which links City Place to the Transit Mall. Additional connections occur within privately owned courtyards that open to the street. The Civic Center features a pedestrian-only route between Broadway and Ocean Boulevard. Ocean Boulevard, an icon for the City, features wide setbacks that provide a pedestrian environment.



FIGURE 2-2

Connectivity Network



CONNECTIVITY

TRANSIT

Transit plays a key role in the mobility network of Downtown Long Beach. Parts of Pacific Avenue, 1st Street and 6th Street, and Long Beach Boulevard include the Metro Blue Line rail in the right-of-way. Additionally, a portion of 1st Street is reserved for bus traffic. These streets have a great amount of pedestrian activity as a result of their connection offerings and are significant activity centers in Downtown.

Los Angeles Metro System

The Metro Blue Line is a central feature of Downtown Long Beach. This light rail route connects to Los Angeles, surrounding cities, and greater Long Beach. Within Downtown there are four Blue Line stops, including an additional stop just north of Downtown on Anaheim Street. The entirety of the Downtown core is within a 5-minute walk of a Blue Line stop. This equals approximately one-third of Downtown.

The Long Beach Transit Mall, located at 1st Street and Pacific Avenue, is the junction of the Blue Line and multiple bus lines. Recent transit and pedestrian improvements at the Mall re-enforce its role as the center of transit activity in the City. In addition to the Blue Line, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority also operates bus routes into Downtown Long Beach, with connections to the Transit Mall.

Local Bus and Water Taxis

Long Beach Transit, the local transit authority, operates an extensive bus system within the City. Several of its regular routes pass through the Downtown area. Bus routes operate mostly on primary streets, and most locations within Downtown Long Beach are within a 2-block distance from a bus route.

Long Beach Transit also operates bus routes for popular tourist destinations and areas of cultural interest. These include the Passport, the AquaLink, and the AquaBus, which provide links to activity centers throughout Downtown and the City. The reintroduction of the streetcar system may add appealing yet efficient means of traversing through the area's increasingly revitalized corridors.

Long Beach Transit also provides connections via water across the Harbor. The AquaBus operates a circular route to all attractions on the Harbor. The AquaLink is a larger vessel that travels farther to Alamitos Bay and also the Harbor destinations. Both of these options can be accessed from Downtown.



CONNECTIVITY

BIKEWAYS

The City of Long Beach would like to be the most bicycle-friendly urban city in the nation. The City and its residents developed a Bicycle Master Plan in 2000. This plan guides the development and maintenance of bicycle-friendly roads and bikeways, support facilities, and other programs. This Plan, which serves commuter and recreational riders, is currently being updated. A number of recreational bikeways and a Downtown street system already support bicycle use. The majority of the Class I bike lanes, those that are separated from vehicular paths, are located along the Los Angeles River and along the harbor through Shoreline Village. All of these are outside of Downtown.

Downtown contains a great asset for bicycle riders: the BikeStation. This commuter bike station, with 24-hour bike storage and amenities, was one of the first of its kind in the nation, and it set a precedent for bicycle use in Downtown. It is located in the center of Downtown, which is convenient for residents and acts as a promotional tool for bicycle use advocacy.

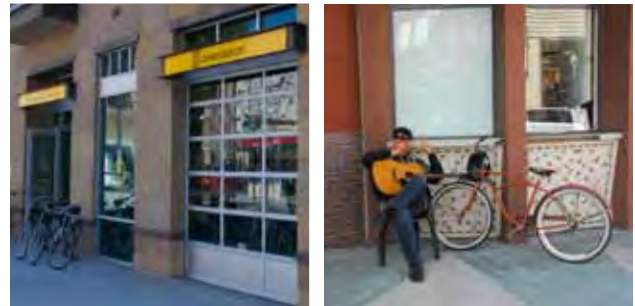
In 2008, the City began operation of City Bike Share, which encourages City employees to park their cars once and use bicycles to travel to nearby meetings, lunches, or errands. In 2009, the City was awarded funding to develop a Metro Blue Line Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan. This Plan will assess and recommend infrastructure and safety improvements to increase bicycling and walking to Metro Stations in Downtown and throughout the City.

Implementing a portion of the Bicycle Master Plan for Downtown, dedicated bike lanes have been completed on 3rd Street and Broadway. Completion of the planned bikeway facilities for Downtown will be the catalyst for achieving the most-bicycle-friendly goal.



Overall Guidelines for a Bicycle-Friendly Downtown:

1. Establish pedestrian and bicycle priority zones on primary and secondary streets within Downtown. Use traffic-calming measures to ensure safety for bicyclists riding in the street, and at pedestrian crosswalks.
2. Promote shared transit, pedestrian, and cyclist use on key transit streets. Enhance the attractiveness of these streetscapes to raise user awareness and comfort.



CONNECTIVITY

An important asset of Downtown is its relatively intact grid street system. The main goal as redevelopment continues is to ensure that this grid is maintained and, where possible, reestablished where past interruptions have occurred. Additionally, the coordination of all modes of transportation is a priority in the Downtown Plan.

The following is a summary of key goals identified for mobility in Downtown:

Overall Guidelines for Creating Great Streets:

1. *Maintain the historic street grid to promote the greatest number of mobility options, retain the historic scale of the streets, and preserve and/or establish new view corridors. Prohibit and discourage any interruption of the street grid.*
2. *Create new connections and corridors as larger sites are redeveloped. Require full vehicle and pedestrian access in new connections. Encourage pedestrian circulation by including mid-block connections in new developments, where feasible.*
3. *Promote shared parking, shared transit, and pedestrian and cyclist use on key transit streets. Enhance the attractiveness of these streetscapes to raise user awareness and comfort.*
4. *Provide active retail and pocket parks along pedestrian zones to encourage eyes on the street and active uses.*
5. *Include lighting along all streets, sidewalks, pedestrian connections, and on private property to ensure comfort and safety.*
6. *Establish pedestrian and bicycle priority zones in primary and secondary streets within Downtown. Use traffic-calming measures to ensure safety for bicyclists riding in the street, and at pedestrian crosswalks.*
7. *Ensure that entryways to all parking structures do not disrupt the pedestrian right-of-way on primary walking streets.*

