

# Downtown Community Plan Implementation Overlay Appendix B

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## Tall Buildings Best Practices

Downtown CPIO Ordinance per Section 1-9

The Best Practices in Appendices B, C, and D of this CPIO are not mandatory and shall not be used to approve, deny, or condition any Project, including those requiring an administrative review, CPIO Director's Determination, CPIO Adjustment, or CPIO Exception, or any other discretionary application filed for a Project in the Downtown CPIO District boundaries. The Best Practice Appendices B, C, and D, provide resources that encourage livable and sustainable development in Downtown Los Angeles.

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# TALL BUILDING BEST PRACTICES

## INTRODUCTION

Tower placement shall be strategically coordinated with neighboring properties in order to find a balance between maximizing views to the sky for pedestrians, minimizing conflicts with existing or potential future towers, and contributing to an attractive skyline. For the purposes of this document, a “tower” is defined as any building over 150 feet in height. Any portion of a building that is above 150 feet in height is subject to the tower standards and guidelines in this section. Final tower placement and spacing shall be subject to the regulations of all applicable codes, including the LAMC, in consultation with staff from the Department of City Planning, Department of Building and Safety and Fire Department. Renderings and elevations of the proposed project in relation to the massing and elevations of surrounding buildings are preferred.

## ORIENTATION, SPACING & RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING CONTEXT

Intent: To promote design and placement of towers that respond to the surrounding context through thoughtful scaling, floor plate sizing, spacing, and orientation. New towers that provide a seamless transition between surrounding buildings while providing definition for surrounding streets, parks, and open space areas, are highly encouraged.

The following section provides best practices on all aspects of the building, and should be considered in their entirety.

## ■ ■ ■ SITE PLANNING

When there is an adjacent Designated or an Eligible Historic Resource that is protected from development per historic preservation regulations, the tower may be spaced per recommendations of the Office of Historic Resources. Where appropriate, incorporate design features so as to not undermine historic resources.

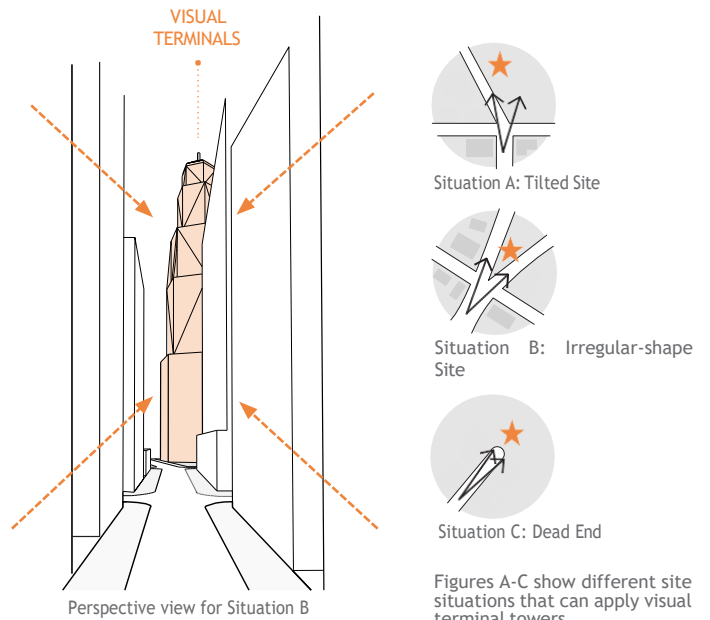
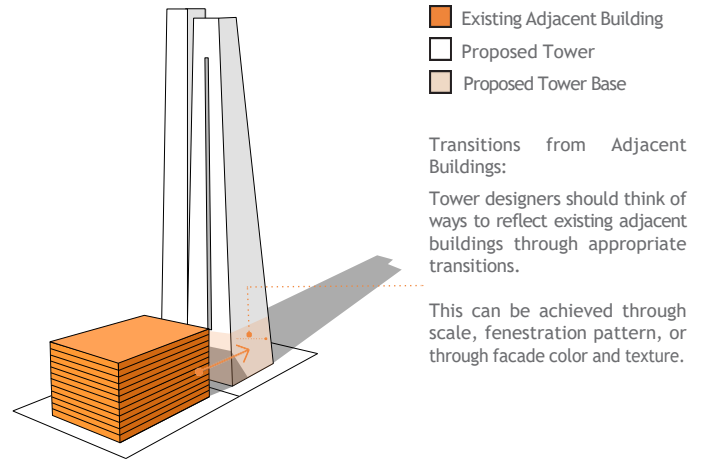
For sites where the adjacent context is lower scale and not anticipated to change, provide a transition in the base building height down to the lower-scale neighbors or incorporate design features that meet the roof line of adjacent structures.

When multiple towers are located within a block or site, vary heights and coordinate placement to create visual interest within the skyline, mitigate wind, and improve access to sunlight and sky view within the public realm. If a project has more than one tower, employ a cohesive design approach and design towers that complement each other.

Situate towers and shape its massing so as to frame and highlight noteworthy natural and built environment features.

Locate and design towers to appropriately frame or terminate visual axes.

When towers are located adjacent to an open space such as a park, consider placement of towers and other techniques to frame and define the open space. Tower placement can enhance the quality of the open space by creating a mix of shade and sunlight areas.



These graphics demonstrate ways in which tall buildings can be located on a site in order to define a visual terminus, form landmarks, and define a sense of space.

## BUILDING DESIGN AND ARTICULATION

Design the base building to fit harmoniously within the existing context of neighboring building heights.

Towers that extend directly upwards from the property line at the street are often appropriate, and are not required to be set back. Curtain walls for towers may also extend vertically from the tower crown to the ground floor to accentuate the tower presence along the street front. Consider innovative techniques to mitigate wind flow such as variation of street wall articulation and material choice, building orientation, softened corners, or modifying the core through twisting and tapering.

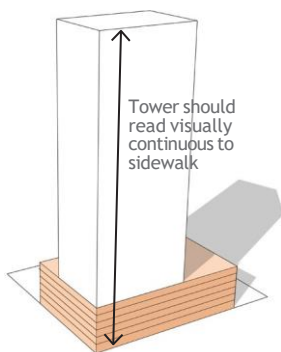
Towers designed to taper upwards, in order to reduce overall bulk and appear slender are generally desirable. Towers in Downtown greatly affect the appearance of the overall city skyline. Evaluations in other cities suggest that towers are most attractive when they have a ratio of height to width of about 3.5:1 (for example, 350 feet tall and 100 feet wide). Consideration of this ratio is a good starting point. Reducing the bulk of a tower's top half, through a process of "sculpting", it can be made more appealing. Consider designing towers that have slender massing and sound proportions.

### COMMON TOWER FORMS

These diagrams illustrate different relationships between the tower, the tower-base and any adjacent street wall.

#### A. TOWERS AT STREET CORNERS

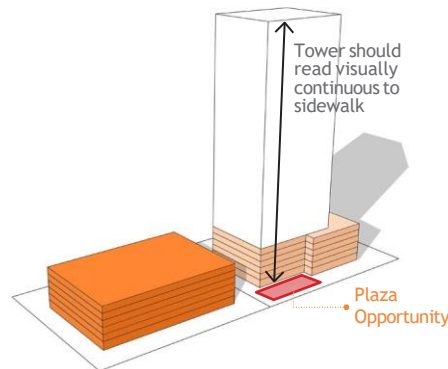
#### B. TOWERS ALONG STREET SIDES



- Proposed Tower
- Proposed Tower Base

##### 1. Tower with Projected Base:

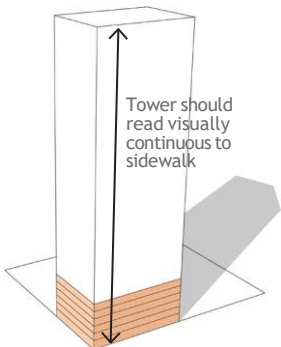
Base (or podium) with the tower set flush to a street corner. The tower massing and detail reads visually continuous to the sidewalk. A curtain wall that extends to the ground floor can be used to reinforce



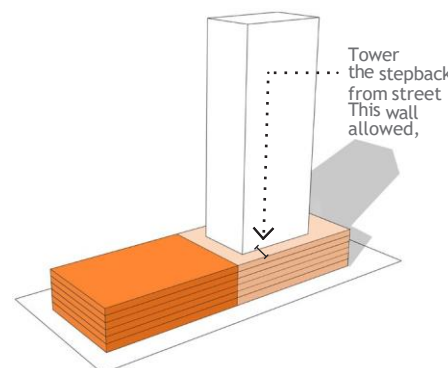
- Existing Adjacent
- Building Proposed
- Tower

##### 3. Tower Engaged with Base:

Base and tower forms are engaged. The tower massing and detail reads visually continuous to the sidewalk.



##### 2. Tower without Projected Base:



##### 4. Tower Set onto a Base:

Usually the tower rises above base and steps back from the street wall 20 feet or more. form is not generally except for projects within the Historic Core or within a property within a block

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS, MATERIALS AND LIGHTING

Choice of materials, architectural detailing and lighting of exterior facades, when thoughtfully incorporated can strengthen the vertical connection between the base and tower portion of a development. Employ building features that contribute to an active street life and provide visual interest from ground level and elevated vantage points.

Where appropriate, inset balconies to avoid arrangements that increase the physical and visual building mass.

Employ color, lighting and material choices in a way that complements surrounding buildings to create a visually appealing composition of solid and transparent materials.

Seamlessly integrate new buildings into the surrounding context while offering variation in material and texture choice, to avoid over-concentration of materials within an area.

Consider providing variety among buildings through subtle details in the curtain wall, and the articulation of a human-scaled base at the street level.



Prominent or focal building entrances can be incorporated into tower design, to support access and wayfinding, and enhance articulation.



## SHAPING THE SKYLINE

When a tower is proposed for a particularly prominent site, consider design and orientation of buildings that respond to its heightened level of importance. Not all towers warrant a signature feature and individual projects should be evaluated for their potential to function as iconic buildings within the larger Downtown skyline. Generally, iconic buildings transform the composition of the skyline and are located on more prominent sites, providing points of orientation and visual interest within the region. Iconic buildings function as gateways into the district and contribute to a lasting and meaningful public legacy. In most cases, these buildings are the tallest in the district, but may also be lower scale buildings recognizable for architectural creativity and excellence.

Iconic buildings warrant a comprehensive level of review and project applicants are highly encouraged to consult with the Department of City Planning at the conceptual and final design phases of the project. When an iconic building is proposed consider the following guidance:

Highlight the importance of an iconic building's primary entrance with appropriate scale and design. Consider ground floor treatments that contribute to a strong sense of arrival and incorporate unique and recognizable design features.

Delineate a building's top with a change in detail and meet the sky with a narrower form, or tapered overhang. Shape iconic towers with tapered sculptural crowns so as to contribute to the quality and character of the overall Downtown skyline. A flat roof is not recommended.

Consider tower forms that appear simple yet elegant and add an endearing sculptural form to the skyline.

Use simple forms for the building crown to create timeless design that subtly integrates with the overall tower design.

In the same way that iconic towers define and strengthen the skyline during the daytime, thoughtful use of decorative lighting can be used to reinforce the presence of the building at night. Not all buildings warrant decorative lighting. Reserve these features for iconic towers to create a consistent sense of rhythm and identity between day and night.

Integrate lighting with the shape of tower crowns to enhance the tower's presence in the skyline. Residential towers are not required to have crown lighting.