

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
BOARD OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONERS**

**DESIGN REVIEW WORKBOOK  
Cultural Affairs Department**

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**INTRODUCTION**

**WHAT GETS REVIEWED AND WHY:**

Jurisdiction of Board of Cultural Affairs Commissioners (consisting of 7 members) was authorized by The Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.106. Its duties are outlined in Administrative Code Section 22.109, which states:

**"THE DESIGN OF NO PUBLIC** building, bridge, approach, fence, retaining wall, lamp, lamp post, or other similar structure proposed to be erected by or under the authority of the city upon any land or in any place belonging to or under the control of the city shall be adopted by any board or officer having charge, superintendence or control of the design or construction thereof, unless such design shall have been first submitted to and approved by the Board of Cultural Affairs Commissioners by a majority vote thereof. No arch, bridge, structure or approach belonging to any PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL or corporation shall be permitted to extend over, into or upon any street, avenue, highway, park or other public place belonging to or under the control of the City of Los Angeles, unless the design and location thereof shall have first been approved by the said Board as hereinbefore provided. "

**SET TIME LIMIT FOR APPROVAL PROCESS**

City Administrative Code Section 22.110 established a 15-day time frame for approval of projects, which are accepted for processing to the Cultural Affairs Commission for review; and which states as follows: "If the said board shall fail to decide upon any matter submitted to it within fifteen days after (Review of) such submission, its decision shall be deemed unnecessary: provided, however, that the time for such decision may be extended by the Council by resolution. (Added, 1975)"

# **SCHEDULE OF COMMISSION MEETING AND SUBMISSION DATES**

## **REGULAR MEETINGS AND SUBMISSIONS**

The Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) currently meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. Submission of the materials for architectural projects is accepted three weeks prior to the meeting and the street lighting projects two weeks prior to the meeting on a Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon. Submissions are also accepted by appointment.

## **SPECIAL MEETINGS**

The CAC on occasion will hold special meetings to expedite review and decision on projects that, due to special circumstances, cannot be held until the next scheduled regular meeting.

## **POSTING OF AGENDAS**

The Brown Act requires that agendas of **regular** CAC meetings be posted on the City's website or City Hall Main Street lobby, at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting time. The agendas of special CAC meetings are required to be posted on the City's website and/or in the City Hall Main Street lobby, at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting time.

## **MAYOR'S DESIGN ADVISORY PANEL (MDAP)**

MDAP is a group of design/planning professionals appointed by the Mayor's office. The CAC solicits the advice of the MDAP on many major projects that come before it. MDAP is a culturally diverse group of volunteer architects, planners, urban designers, artists, and landscape architects of the highest caliber, who are invited on a rotational basis to review CAC projects at an earlier stage before the project is submitted for CAC review. MDAP's purpose is to raise the quality of civic design so that City projects will enhance community character and set an example for private development.

## **PRE-SUBMITTAL CONFERENCE WITH STAFF**

By appointment, the architectural staff of the CAC is ready to assist, review and give guidance to the applicants and City Department representatives at an early stage and prior to the formal review process. Please call the main desk ask for CAC architectural staff at (213) 202-5500 to arrange a meeting.

## **PERCENT FOR ART - CITY BUILDINGS**

Administrative Code Section 19.85 requires that one percent of the construction budget must be set aside for artistic and cultural amenities, facilities or services. For further information please call Public Art Division of the Cultural Affairs Department at (213) 202-5544

## **ARTS DEVELOPMENT FEE - PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT**

The Arts Development Fee outlined in Administrative Code Section 22.118 requires most private commercial and industrial developments over \$500,000 in value to include an artistic component equal to no greater than one percent of its construction budget. For further information please call Public Art Division of the Cultural Affairs Department at (213) 202-5544. The CAC must also review and approve the on-site art component of all projects within its jurisdiction.

## **CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

### ***A VISION OF LOS ANGELES***

Los Angeles is one of the world's mega-cities, and is blessed with a beautiful and diverse landscape -mountains and foothills, canyons and valleys, rivers, deserts, beaches, ocean and harbor, and by the splendor and variety of its flora and climate. It has both a history and a present existence, which is expressed in the architecture of its public and private buildings, its streets and street lighting and its open spaces. Its presence is expressed in the entrepreneurial spirit of its citizens from the giants of oil, entertainment, agriculture, and manufacturing to a myriad of small businesses and services; and thrives on initiative and development which must be properly managed as well as encouraged.

Against this background, we envision Los Angeles as providing the framework for the clustering and organization of "places"--- each place in itself enhancing every human activity that occurs there.

We envision a City that recognizes and nurtures its ethnic diversity by encouraging individual neighborhoods to create their own distinct public environments and to reinforce the preservation of its historic legacy.

The following quote from LA 2000 summarizes our vision, "...we want Los Angeles to be a city of liveable communities with a healthful physical environment; a place where ALL individuals can grow, learn and be fulfilled; a great crossroads city where the diversity of our people enriches our urban fabric. "

What the CAC does in the present will become Los Angeles' history. The CAC stands as a guardian of the quality of our history, our present and our future history.

### ***POLICIES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES***

The Cultural Affairs Commission will evaluate, within the parameters of established entitlements, the overall quality of proposed projects including the placement of mass, form, spatial elements, and visual impact of projects upon the aesthetics of the City.

The review of urban design elements will be measured against the urban design vision adopted as an aspect of the general and/or specific plan for the community in which the project is located.

The review of architectural character will be evaluated against an understanding of the special identity and quality of the area in which the project is located. New projects should be expected to augment and enhance the community in which they are located rather than to merely "fit in".

The intent of the design review is to promote the general welfare of the community by the following:

Encourage good professional design practices to protect the community from the adverse effects of poor design.

Encourage quality exterior design to improve the appearance of the community and surrounding area.

Encourage quality interior design using light and space to enhance the working environment.

Promote originality, creativity, sustainability and diversity in design.

Support wise investment and cost effectiveness consistent with quality design.

The Cultural Affairs Commission considers the following issues important in evaluation of the Architectural submissions:

**A. CONTEXT**

The project should take into account its context, and consider the buildings, uses, streets and open space that surround it. If the architect feels that the project, because of its special qualities, need *not* be compatible with the context, he/she should be purposeful in his/her deviation from context.

**1. COMPATIBILITY**

Individual elements of the projects should relate to one another in compatible design. The details of design should relate to the project's overall architectural characteristics.

**2. OPEN SPACE**

Development of open space should be treated as an integral part of the overall design, rather than the treatment of the leftover spaces. Components may include:

- Pedestrian Walkways
- Courtyards
- Cloisters
- Colonnades
- Public Plazas
- Green Spaces

Special care should be given to open space development and to appropriate planting design, to create pleasant environments both for people who may work in the project and for those who visit or pass by.

**B. DESIGN QUALITY**

All City projects should show an awareness of the public sector's responsibility to set an example of social and architectural quality by leadership in raising general design standards.

**1. APPEARANCE**

The design of a building, or complex of buildings, should be a purposeful response to the nature of the public activities it supports.

**2. MATERIALS**

The materials used should be of the best quality available within the budget, and appropriate to the character of the architecture and surrounding buildings.

# SITE AND URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE PROJECT

## **CHARACTER OF THE AREA**

- Purposeful enhancement or transformation of existing community character (Neighborhood or district, boundary edges, gateways, nodes, landmarks).

## **SITE ORGANIZATION**

- Profile, mass and form
- Transition to adjacent building and sites
- Height relationships
- Clearly defined non-conflicting pedestrian and vehicular public access
- Clearly emphasize public entries and patterns of use
- View opportunities (preserve and/or create)
- Integrate disabled access into overall site and building design
- Direct exterior lighting into site
- Integrate fences and perimeter walls into overall site and design
- Street trees (extend or initiate planting wherever appropriate)

## **CULTURAL IMPACTS**

- Preserve and protect historic character
- Provide public gathering spaces (indoor/outdoor) where appropriate
- Consider acoustic qualities

# DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

## I. REQUIRED SUBMITTAL MATERIALS

Submit the required materials on the following forms for review:

a. A thoroughly completed application form as follows:

**FORM A-1:** For first submittal of Buildings, Bridges and other Major Structures for conceptual review.

**FORM A-2:** For resubmittal of the above projects.

**FORM B:** For minor projects; including minor additions, marquees, canopies, retaining walls, gates, fences and walls, nonstandard pavements and landscaping in the public way. **This form could also be used for Preliminary Early Review of all projects (voluntary - no fee).**

b. Ten sets of reduced prints (maximum size: 11"x17"). These are distributed to CAC members and DCA staff..

c. A copy of a Power Point presentation on a USB flash drive, or a board-mounted set of drawings for presentation to the Cultural Affairs Commission which will be returned. (Drawings should be at a scale appropriate to size of project considering that they will be viewed from 10 to 20 feet away.) Models of the site and project are optional, but extremely helpful presentation tools.

Cultural Affairs Commission may request additional materials as deemed necessary to clarify the design intent of your project.

### **NO SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THE REQUIRED MATERIALS**

## II. DESIGN REVIEW STAGES

### A. PRELIMINARY EARLY REVIEW (Optional)

*This category may be used by architects seeking Cultural Affairs Commission guidance in advance of the formal approval process, no fee is required.*

#### **Submittal Materials Required:**

- Location and vicinity maps.
- A masterplan for the project, if applicable.
- Site plan showing the footprint of the building(s) and landscape concept, & alterations, if any.
- Photographs of the site and its context.
- Preliminary plans (floor plans, elevations, sections), clearly communicating the overall space proportions and relationships.

### B. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW (All documents can be submitted in a Power Point electronic format on a CD eliminating the need for board mounted presentation drawings)

*Submit as early as possible in the conceptual design phase with all required documents of the submission materials, as listed below. Intent: to review as early as possible, thus benefiting both the City and the architect/designer. It will be the architect's / designer's responsibility to address design issues early and comprehensively. The Cultural Affairs Commission will determine through this submission whether the project is a "significant project", requiring "Schematic" Approval.*

- **Location Map** (Include in drawing set): indicating the area of the city in which the project is located (Example: Thomas Bros. map).
- **Vicinity Map:** indicating at least a 4-block radius and significant adjacent projects (including Historic Cultural Monuments), features and other relevant issues affected by or affecting the project site (included in drawing set).
- **Site Plan:** clearly represent all features of the entire site including:
  - All adjacent streets including sidewalks, street trees, lights, and transit stops
  - Property/lease lines
  - Pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation to and within site
  - Parking and waiting areas
  - Walls/fences/retaining walls/ramps/stairs
  - Existing topography, proposed grading
  - Open space areas - hardscape and landscape areas
  - Arrangement/form and use of all buildings
  - Accessory building/structures such as guard house, outdoor storage, trash collection, technical areas
  - Outdoor lighting
  - Outdoor signage, building mounted
- **Plans:** All floor levels indicating all significant uses, and clearly representing design intent.

- **Elevations:** All elevations of each building that clearly communicates the design intent. Label all proposed finish materials.
- **Sections:** drawn as deemed necessary by the architect/designer. Additional sections might be requested.
- **Landscape Plan:** location, species and size of plant materials (include common names).
- **Art Component:** if applicable. Contact Public Art staff at (213) 202-5544.
- **Color Photographs:** prepare photographs which illustrate the condition of the subject property and how adjacent properties, including those across the street, relate to the subject property. Photographs are to be of adequate size for the staff to easily visualize the entire property including all existing structures, open areas, parking lots/structures, etc. and its relationship to all the surrounding properties and the community.

Elevation (straight on, not oblique) photos taken from across each adjacent street. A series of overlapping shots that are spliced together to show the entire elevation on each side of the property.

Photos from within the property: show existing conditions not clearly described in the elevation photos.

- **Rendering(s) and/or Model:** 3-dimensional drawings (isometric, perspectives, etc.) of the project to help the Cultural Affairs Commission visualize the overall forms of the building(s); does not have to be in color. A model may be substituted for the 3-dimensional drawing(s). The model will be returned, but a copy of the photographs of the model should be submitted.

### C. SCHEMATIC REVIEW

**Note:** If your project was not designated as a "Significant Project" by the Cultural Affairs Commission at the Conceptual Review, skip to D.

*Submit in the Schematic Design Phase upon determination by the Cultural Affairs Commission to be a "significant project." Intent: to place submitting Agency and architect/designer on notice that the Cultural Affairs Commission will be paying special attention to this project due to its particular impact on the City. It will be the responsibility of the Cultural Affairs Commission to spell out clearly its concerns through the Conceptual Submission, and the requirements, for the architect/designer to respond to in this phase of submission.*



**Examples of such projects may include airport terminals, major libraries, major recreational facilities, and regional police headquarters.**

Submission materials are the same as for Conceptual Review. Incorporate your responses to the concerns of the Cultural Affairs Commission in the resubmittal form.

**D. FINAL REVIEW (All documents with the exception of color and material boards can be submitted in a Power Point electronic format on a CD eliminating the need for board mounted presentation drawings)**

*Submit at the end of Conceptual or Schematic Review phase at least 60 days prior to application for Building Permit. Intent: this submission will be the final design approval for the Architect/Designer to continue into succeeding phases of the project.*

Submit materials as required for Conceptual or Schematic Review, incorporating the responses to the concerns of the Commission and providing higher level of detail in drawings.

**In addition, provide the following:**

- **Color and Material Samples:** (returnable to the applicant) for all interior and exterior finish materials. Colors must be accurate.
- **Color Rendering(s) and/or Model:** to aid the Cultural Affairs Commission in visualizing the project. Colors and details must be accurate. Cultural Affairs Commission may require a model on certain projects. Models and rendering will be returned, but a copy of the photographs of model and rendering should be submitted.
- **Landscaping Photos:** color photos of the landscaping materials used should be presented.
- **Furniture Layout:** Provide typical furniture layout on plans if applicable.

**E. STAFF REVIEW AND APPROVAL STAMP**

*Submit plans at the end of construction document phase, during plan check, for approval stamp and electronic clearance. **Building permits will not be issued without this step.** Staff shall ensure that final approval Commission comments have been implemented in construction documents.*

## APPENDIX A

### THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### SUBMITALS

**Q: Who is eligible to submit the review materials?**

A: The person submitting the materials for review should be thoroughly familiar with the project and should be able to describe the plans and the various components of the project to the staff architect.

**Q: What format should be used for the submittal materials?**

A:     1. The Reduced Sets: Should be submitted at a maximum size of 11" x 17"  
       2. The Presentation Set: Either a Power Point presentation (preferable) or physical boards. The presentation boards (returnable to the applicant) should be at a scale visually effective from 10 to 20 ft. distance.

NOTE: The application lists all the necessary materials needed for each phase of the review.

As a general rule, find the clearest way to communicate your design ideas, through the drawings, renderings, photographs and model. Let common sense be the basic guide in your decision-making.

The Commission welcomes submission of several alternative designs at the PRELIMINARY EARLY REVIEW stage.

**Q: What if some of the required submittal materials listed in the application are not applicable to my project?**

A: Cultural Affairs Commission staff may waive some of the required submittal items if not applicable to your project. Check with staff architect by telephone (213)202-5501, or email [haroot.avanesian@lacity.org](mailto:haroot.avanesian@lacity.org) in advance of submission date.

## **APPENDIX A (Continued)**

**PRESENTATION** (An introductory presentation will be made by the staff architect. The applicant must be present.)

### **Q: How should I present my project?**

#### **A: I. Conceptual Review (Preliminary review similar)**

1. Introduce yourself, the project team, and city department representatives, etc.
2. Describe the project:
  - a. Characteristics of the site and the surroundings. (show photos, site plan, etc.)
  - b. Discuss program, design concept, approach to problems and alternate solutions.
  - c. Explain your design: i.e., plans, elevations, sections, model or rendering. Review the landscaping plan(s), explain the structural system(s) and building materials envisioned.
  - d. If your project has been previously disapproved, discuss any changes in response to the Commission's concerns.
  - e. Review art plan briefly if applicable.

#### **II. Final Review (Schematic review similar)**

- a. Repeat steps 1 & 2 as described in the conceptual review stage above, discussing any changes or refinements to your project.
- b. Discuss your responses to each of the specific concerns of the commission at the previous review.
- c. Present and discuss colors & materials samples (Interior & Exterior).

### **Q: In case of power point presentations what equipment do I need to bring?**

**A:** We provide a projector, screen and a laptop computer. You may bring your own computer and connect to our system and you presentation on a USB flash drive..

**APPENDIX B**  
**OVER THE COUNTER REVIEW & SIGN OFF**  
of  
**MINOR PROJECT**  
by  
**COMMISSION STAFF ARCHITECT**

As described on page 1, City Administrative code outlines the jurisdiction of the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC), which requires that in general, all projects on or upon City land be reviewed by CAC. The staff architect, however, upon the review of certain minor\* projects, might deem them to be insignificant in relation to aesthetic values sought by the CAC board, and issue an over the counter clearance in lieu of a full Commission review.

Examples of such projects which will be considered on a case by case basis are as follows:

- Construction of temporary nature
- Disabled accessibility code compliance
- Fire Dept. code compliance
- Seismic Rehabilitation with minor visual impact
- Interior tenant improvement work
- New sign on existing marquee
- Paint and other cosmetic repairs
- Landscaping only projects
- Installation of equipment
- Paving and striping of existing parking lots
- Replacement and repair of existing buildings in kind

Over the counter sign off by the staff architect when pertinent, will help applicants save significant amount of time and help streamline their permitting process. To contact the staff architect please call (213) 202 5501 or email at [HAROOT.AVANESIAN@LACITY.ORG](mailto:HAROOT.AVANESIAN@LACITY.ORG)

\* Minor projects can be defined as projects of small scale, low valuation with little or no visual impact.

The Cultural Affairs Commission will evaluate, within the parameters of established entitlements, the overall quality of proposed projects including the placement of mass, form, spatial elements, and visual impact of projects upon the aesthetics of the City.