

Downtown Los Angeles

California



Location: Los Angeles, California
Type: Downtown Plan
Year Design: 1990
Status: Planned
Size: 610 Acres
Contact: City of Los Angeles
Planning Department



DPZ acted with the lead firm of Moule & Polyzoides to craft this downtown plan for Los Angeles in 1990. Designed through a five-year public process, the aim of this project was to reinforce the viability of the Los Angeles downtown as a dominant urban core. Decades of massive road and freeway construction after the Second World War gave rise to competing sub-centers in neighboring communities, which drew commercial activity away from the downtown to such an extent that some planners and local civic leaders were skeptical of the need for a strong regional center. The Strategic Plan, however, argued convincingly that a newly energized downtown would benefit the economic, social, and environmental future of the area.



The plan, developed over the course of four charrettes, prescribed specific, physical design solutions and policy directives. At the heart of the proposal is the reconstruction of a series of pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use neighborhoods and districts housing up to 100,000 new residents. The plan also recommended the densification of existing, well serviced urban areas as a way to curb Los Angeles's pervasive suburban sprawl. This strategy would promote compact growth and discourage low-density development. The downtown would also function as the hub of an ambitious new rail transit system.

A series of 16 "catalytic projects" was designed to jump-start the cycle of investment and development in the downtown. Widely dispersed throughout the area, these projects are emblematic of the incremental nature of this Strategic Plan. Rather than relying on single, large scale investment, future growth would be based on a series of smaller expenditures that make their financing in this era of limited resources more feasible.

Following the Master Plan's proposal of creating critical mass, the strategic small scale expenditures were balanced with plans for concentrating civic uses in the core. Staples Arena, the LA Convention Center, the Disney Performing Arts Center, and the LA Cathedral have all been completed or have begun construction.