

- DTLA 2040 -

Neighborhood Profile: Chinatown East

Each week, we will highlight an area with distinct zoning characteristics contained in [DTLA 2040](#), which is the community plan for Downtown that will establish the blueprint for new development for the next 20 years. DTLA 2040 is currently underway and City Planning's next project milestone is the release of the Draft EIR, expected in spring 2020.

This week we are highlighting **Chinatown East**, an area approximately bounded by Ord Street, Hill Street, N. Spring Street and LA State Historic Park.

DTLA 2040 is the first community plan to implement the City's new form-based code which means all new zoning is organized in the following manner: **[Form-Frontage-Standards] [Use-Density] [Overlay]**.

- **Form** directly relates to the allowable building size.
- **Frontage** dictates how a building will appear when viewed from the street.
- **Standards** reflect if the area is auto or pedestrian-orientated.
- **Use** controls what type of activity inside the building is allowed.
- **Density** governs how many homes can be built within the building envelope.
- **Overlay** is a catch-all that regulates anything beyond the zoning code. In the case for DTLA 2040, the overlay provision implements the Community Benefits Program, Downtown Design Guidelines and existing area focused overlays.

As proposed in DTLA 2040, **Chinatown East** is primarily characterized by the following zoning:

[MLN1-SH2-5] [XN1-FA] [CPIO]

[Medium-Limited-Narrow 1, Shopfront 2, District 5] [Commercial-Mixed Neighborhood 1-Limited by Floor Area]

[PLM1-MK1-5] [XN1-FA] [CPIO]

[Medium-Plus-Limited-Medium 1, Market 1, District 5] [Commercial-Mixed-Neighborhood 1-Limited by Floor Area]

The maximum FAR in areas covered by form district MLN1, including much of Hill Street and Broadway, is 6:1 and the max height is 5 stories. District PLM1 generally applies to the eastside of Broadway and Spring Street and allows a max base FAR of 6:1 and base height of 12 stories with the ability to achieve a max FAR of 8.5:1 and max height of 15 stories through the Community Benefits System. In general, this area allows for commercial use within a 5,000 square foot establishment size on the ground floor, as well as housing. Other use regulations in this area include: only restaurants are permitted alcohol licenses, hotels are limited to a maximum of 49 keys and K-12 educational facilities are only allowed through a conditional use permit.

Like the rest of DTLA, under the proposed plan, Chinatown East does not have density limitations and above-grade parking is counted toward project FAR. **Please note not all parcels within Chinatown East are this proposed zoning. To review parcel by parcel zoning designations as proposed by DTLA 2040 please click [here](#).*

CCA is concerned about the building height limits and restrictions on commercial tenants and schools in this area. Despite an allowable 6.0 FAR development capacity, the 5-story height limit greatly constrains the potential for new development and housing. Additionally, while some areas allow buildings up to 12-15 stories, wood construction generally can only be built up to 8 stories, and concrete and steel construction is not economical unless it is a minimum of approximately 20 stories. This means that the 12- to 15-story height limit acts more like an 8-story height limit in practice, which again reduces opportunity for new housing. There is no apparent rationale for limiting buildings to the prescribed heights or for limiting commercial establishments to 5,000 SF and hotels to 49 keys. We are also concerned that K-12 educational facilities -- which are needed in DTLA -- would be required to obtain a conditional use permit to operate in this area. Collectively, these requirements do not support an inclusive DTLA and are out of character with the vision for DTLA as a vibrant, 24/7 urban environment.

We remain focused on the impact of counting above-grade parking towards project FAR as a major factor that will increase the cost of producing new housing, and it is exacerbated by the building height limits in this area of Chinatown. It is one of CCA's primary advocacy objectives for DTLA 2040 to maximize opportunities for housing, including workforce housing, and we will continue to evaluate the plan through that lens.