

- DTLA 2040 -

Neighborhood Profile: Little Tokyo

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 summer 2020.

This week we are highlighting **Little Tokyo**, an area generally bounded by Los Angeles Street to the west, Temple Street to the north, Alameda Street to the east and 4th Street to the south (note: these boundaries roughly align with the zoning for the area and are not contiguous with the boundaries of the Little Tokyo Business Improvement District).

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, **Little Tokyo** 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]

[PUM2-SH2-5] [XC1-FA] [CPIO]

[Medium Plus-Unspecified-Medium 2, Shopfront 2, District 5] [Commercial-Mixed Community 1, Limited by Floor Area]

The proposed zoning approach for Little Tokyo is to limit building scale and land use where there are existing low-rise buildings such as along the northside of 1st Street and alleyways like Japanese Village Plaza Mall, while providing more development flexibility in all other areas of the neighborhood.

The areas with existing low-rise development are largely characterized by the MLN1 form district and the XN1 use district. MLN1 permits a 6:1 FAR max and max building height of 5 stories. The XN1 use district is intended to support the clustering of commercial, cultural, entertainment and institutional uses that cater to immediately surrounding neighborhoods. XN1 limits ground-floor commercial tenant sizes to a maximum of 5,000 square feet and hotels to 49 keys, and also allows K-12 schools only with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

All other areas of Little Tokyo are primarily zoned with the PUM2 form district and XC1 use district. PUM2 allows a 6:1 base FAR and 8.5:1 FAR max through the Community Benefits System. It does not limit building height but requires a 10' minimum step-back at the 12th story. The XC1 use district allows for commercial uses generally up to 50,000 square feet per establishment on the ground floor, as well as a wide range of housing types. XC1 also limits hotels to 149 keys.

Like the rest of DTLA above-grade parking is counted towards project FAR in Little Tokyo.

**Please note not all parcels within Little Tokyo 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, hotels and schools in this area.

Despite an allowable 6.0 FAR development capacity, the 5-story height limit in the MLN1 form district greatly constrains the potential for new development and housing. While the narrow alleyways may require some design consideration to allow light and air, this should be accomplished through setback and massing specifications, not a severe limit on building

heights, especially in a transit-rich area. Likewise, there is no clear need to limit building heights along the north side of 1st Street or on the block between Los Angeles, 2nd, San Pedro and 3rd Streets.

We also believe that the limits on commercial establishments to 5,000 SF and hotels to 49 keys in the XN1 use district, or 50,000 SF and 149 keys in the XC1 use district are arbitrary. They may ultimately constrain opportunities for tenants that are desirable to locate in DTLA.

K-12 schools in the XN1 use district should be allowed by-right and not be required to obtain a CUP. Little Tokyo is an established residential neighborhood and would greatly benefit from community resources like schools within walking distance to continue to grow sustainably into the future. Additionally, schools are considered a Tier 2 public benefit within the Community Benefits System, and the City should therefore make provision of schools simple and easy, not impose additional approval processes.

Lastly, we also 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 entrepreneurial uses. It is one of CCA's primary advocacy objectives for DTLA 2040 to maximize opportunities for a jobs/housing balance and we will continue to evaluate the plan through that lens. We believe that the plan should at least exempt from project FAR above-ground parking that meets certain design standards, including if it is wrapped with active uses, mechanically ventilated or is convertible for other uses in the future.