

Project Restore
CIVIC CROSSROADS PLAN





project area

Federal Block



Federal Block

General Site Security Goals and Strategies

From an urban design perspective, we recommend treatment of the block from Aliso south to Temple as a transitional block. This term describes its mediating location between the core of the Pueblo and the core of Civic Center, and also reflects the character of its uses and buildings. Along Spring Street, the United States Federal Courthouse is an important landmark with a broad attractive lawn, but the particular use of the building generates very little street activity. The County's Hall of Justice is under renovation, and its ultimate re-use is not known; but its monumental architecture and single arched entrance make it unlikely to spur significant street activity. Like the Courthouse, it has a broad setback (due to the removal of the former Buena Vista Street parallel to Spring Street) which contains an attractive grove. Together, these two buildings form an impressive landscaped block where pedestrians may enjoy the architecture, greenery and shade, but are unlikely to stop and linger.

Indeed lingering is discouraged because of the security concerns associated with almost all Federal buildings. The Courthouse is now surrounded with a makeshift arrangement of curved concrete slabs known as "jersey barriers". Since 9/11, many Federal buildings have been upgraded with street designs that incorporate security measures while actually enhancing the street environment, and we recommend such a strategy as an essential part of Project Area B, both on Spring and Main Streets.

Main Street presents similar issues on the Courthouse side, but across the street, the Los Angeles Mall remains an open question. Its sunken retail areas have drained the Main Street sidewalk of life since it opened in the 1970's. And despite a number of attempts to upgrade



Main Street at United States Courthouse
Concrete barriers, stone retaining wall, lawn



Spring Street at United States Courthouse
Broad lawn, view north to Plaza Church and San Gabriel mountains



(BELOW) Spring Street at the Federal Block
Pedestrians are enclosed by the imposing facades of the United States Courthouse and the County Hall of Justice.



Federal Block

the facility, including one that occurred after the adoption of the Ten-Minute Diamond plan, the Mall remains essentially unchanged from its opening day. It is unclear whether a current initiative by the City to hire a private developer to upgrade the below-grade retail offerings will significantly affect the urban environment at street level.

Therefore we recommend that Project Area B include a joint effort by the Federal Government, the County and the City to assess the needs on both sides of both streets, and jointly implement improvements which:

1. address security needs
2. enhance the retail offerings of the Mall
3. improve the street-level pedestrian environment and experience
4. recognize each block's function as a pedestrian link between the Pueblo core and the Civic Center core, with an important threshold or gateway at Aliso Street

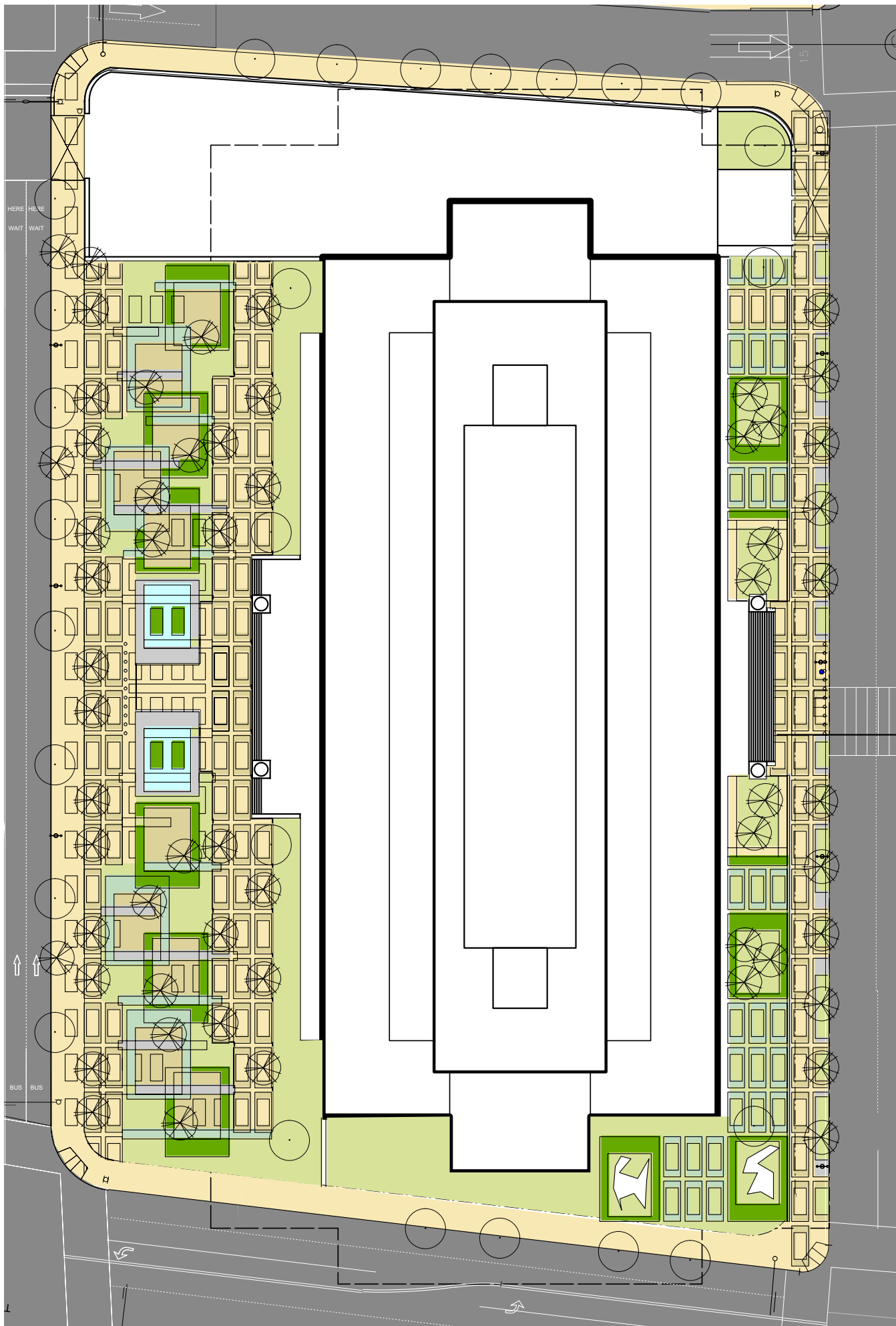
Multiple goals concerning site security:

Measures must be integral to the workplace and designed to reduce risk, while enhancing the overall, everyday use of public buildings and public space for the occupant and user and pedestrian just passing by. Although the majority of security measures implemented will thankfully never be called upon to thwart an attack, these same measures will have a profound impact, every day, on the quality and attractiveness of the workplace and environment. Designing a site for its daily functions, incorporating security elements as seamlessly as possible, and allowing for adjustments in protection in response to varying levels of threat, designs can reach a successful balance between security and openness.

(OPPOSITE) Conceptual landscape plan for the United States Courthouse block

Challenges:

- Determination of threats and vulnerabilities
- Decisions about what to protect
- Selection of countermeasures



Federal Block

Federal Courthouse Landscape Design

The Federal Courthouse was built between 1937 and 1940 and is an example of Art Moderne architecture. The building has a simple stepped rectangular massing with windows set back and arranged in a vertical striped pattern. The building is clad in pale pink color terra cotta. Other features include large fluted columns at the Spring Street pedestrian entry. Large bronze doors and bronze flagpole bases mark the entrance on both Spring Street and Main Street entries. Above entry doors are intricate aluminum grilles decorated with flowers and seals from the various Departments in the U.S. Government.

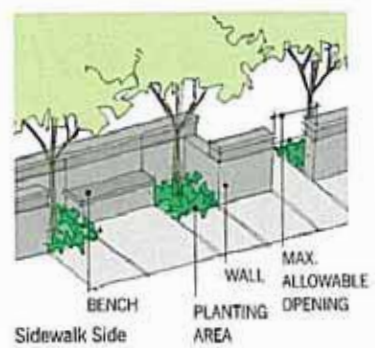
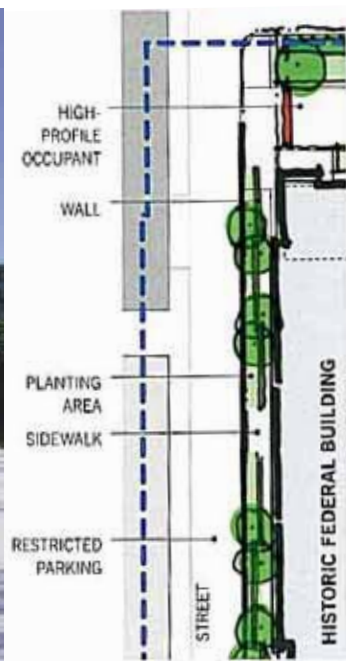
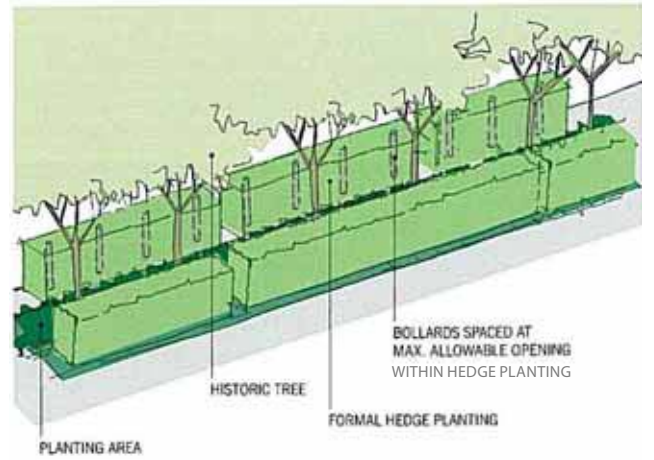
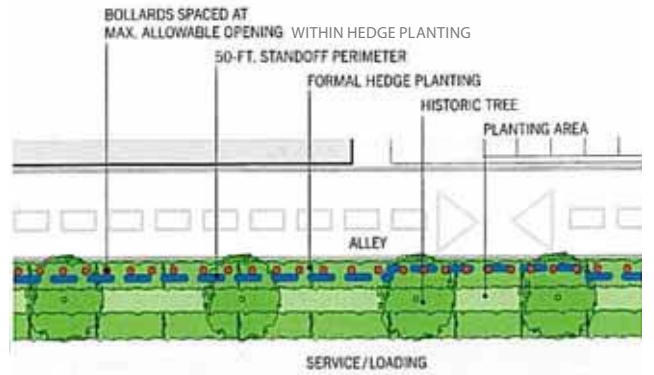
The Federal Courthouse landscape design forms for the new plaza are derived from the architecture. The rectangular paving and planting patterns evolved from the vertical striped window patterns. The larger rectangular landscape gardens are organized as parterres similar to the design of the aluminum grille detail of the building. Our intent was to give the federal block a unique site-specific civic identity such as the HUD Plaza in Washington D.C. and Federal Courts Building in Minneapolis.

The landscape elements strive to improve site security and spatial quality for the users and connect the plaza with the urban fabric. The site is divided into two areas with differing site conditions along each of the east and west streets. Design strategies were developed for each of the two conditions and are based on The Site Security Design Guide booklet by U.S. General Service Administration (GSA) distributed in June 2007.

The building is set back much farther on Spring Street than on Main Street. The larger building setback provided an opportunity to use less obtrusive measures

(OPPOSITE) Examples of Security-Based Design Principles

A comprehensive design satisfies multifaceted site requirements to maximize functionality, aesthetics, and a total project value for its users and the community at large. The facility should be integrated within its neighborhood context. Such a facility is less of an isolated target, benefits from the surveillance network of the city, and is an attractive place to work or pass through because of nearby amenities.



Federal Block

to secure the building. Landscape elements such as topography, water features, planted hedge bollards and trees are used to improve site security and provide users with more usable landscape spaces. We continue the garden paving pattern to the street edge to create a more generous sidewalk and seamless edge between the plaza and the streetscape

Along Main Street the building is set back much closer than on Spring Street so less space is available for site security elements. In this area we have incorporated infiltration planters with seatwalls along the curb edge to secure the building. The infiltration planters are multifunctional. In addition to site security, these infiltration planters recharge groundwater by collecting and filtering street water run-off. The integrated concrete low walls also provide seating opportunities for pedestrians. We are also proposing ramps that provide ADA access to the building along the Main street entry. Other site security measures being proposed along Main Street include large scale sculptures at the corner of Temple and Main Street, bollards adjacent to the main entry and collapsible paving at the entry steps.

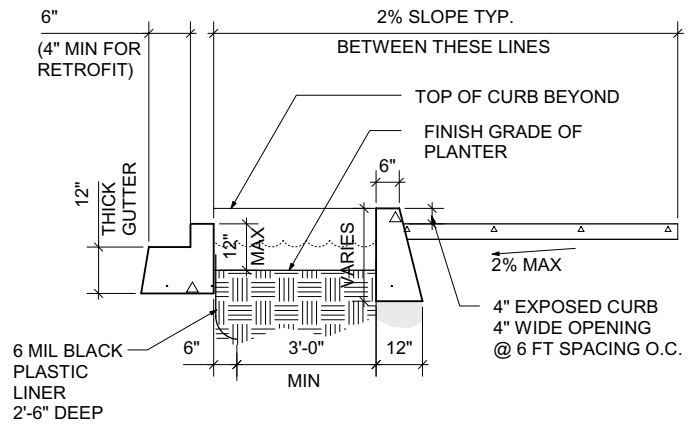
These design strategies are preliminary and a more detailed site security analysis will be needed to better understand site limitations and to identify areas that are more vulnerable.

Design elements : bollard, sculptural or seating barriers, walls, hardened street furniture, fences, topography, dry moats, collapsible surfaces, water, landscaping and planting

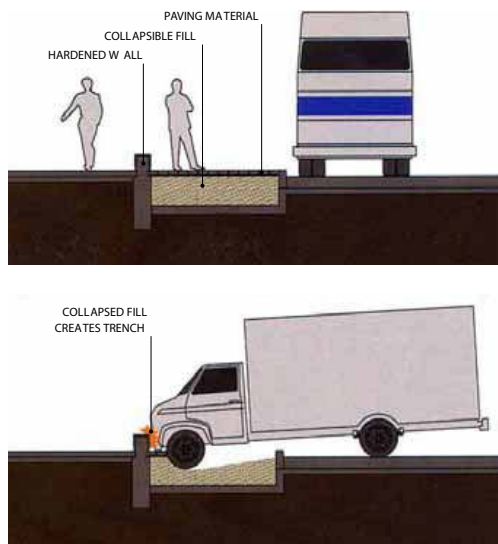


Public use - Activities that populate the site - even those as simple as taking a lunch break outdoors, provide "eyes on the street," increasing both security and personal safety through informal surveillance. Generous setbacks allow for the design of such spaces while still maintaining a safe standoff zone.

Landscaping and planting in combination with hardened elements such as bollards can create a natural, repellent barriers while enhancing the beauty of the landscape. Although these may block some desired sight lines, acceptable heights can be established and maintained.



Site amenities are a design opportunity to achieve multiple goals both in security and sustainability. Federal building standards now require new buildings and major renovation projects to meet certain LEED sustainability certification. A simple design for an infiltration planter can serve both to harden the site edge and achieve sustainable goals.

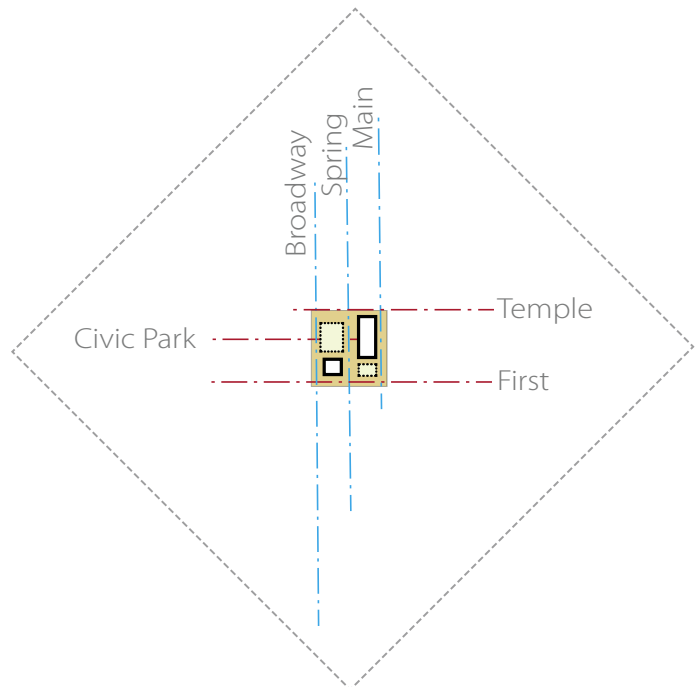


Subtly sloping tree lawns, playful earth berms, and varigated retaining walls are some of the many landscape treatments that both stop vehicular approach and enhance site design quality.

project area **Civic Crossroads**



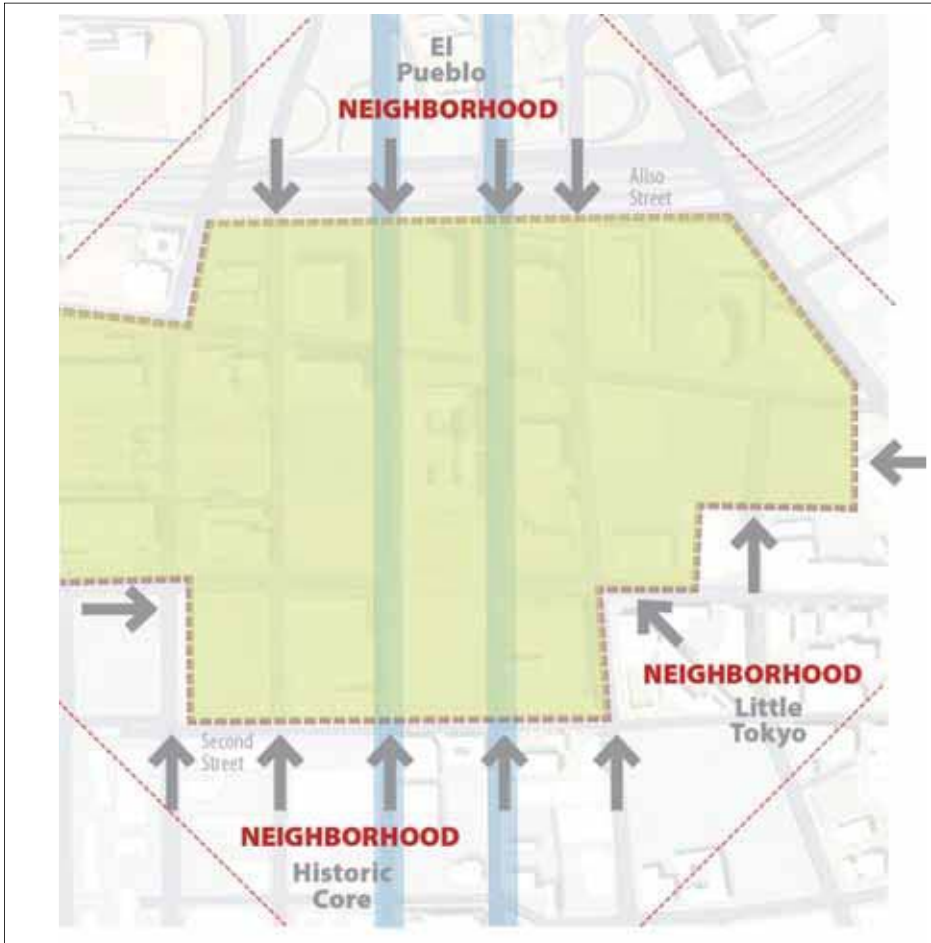
At the heart of the project, we recommend designating a precise zone as the Civic Crossroads, jointly planned and administered by the City and County, and designed to meet the need for a symbolic place of public gathering for decades to come.





A Neighborhood-Friendly Civic Center

The growth of residential and mixed-use neighborhoods around the Civic Center core (and within the corners of the Ten-Minute Diamond) has increased demands for improving the Civic Center as a district. As more local residents translate into more pedestrians (and transit users), there is a growing constituency for through streets and paths which are safe, green and active, especially at night and on weekends. Conceptions of the Civic Center as a kind of gilded “government ghetto”, with grand but inaccessible, single-purpose buildings and green spaces are becoming obsolete. Civic Center leaders can offer an alternative vision of a highly walkable, green, and vibrant district with multiple uses and active sidewalks linking the neighborhoods to each other. The new Civic Park from Grand to Spring will add a critically important pedestrian link.



Residential Neighborhoods Press in on the Civic Center

The revitalization of Bunker Hill, the Historic Core, Little Tokyo, Chinatown, and El Pueblo / Union Station as residential neighborhoods has called attention to the Civic Center's overly monumental scale and pedestrian unfriendly environment. New neighborhood councils, real estate developers, and private citizens are putting pressure on elected officials to improve what some see as a "government ghetto" that inhibits neighborhood redevelopment. Main and Spring Streets are key to such improvements.



Making the Civic Center Traversable and Green

At a district-wide scale, we have identified 21 "street blocks", (along with their corresponding 12 "city blocks") which have adjacency to almost every major government building. A lively enhancement of these streetscapes for pedestrians would transform the Civic Center from a single-purpose district into an active and attractive civic core that links adjacent neighborhoods. These blocks would fall largely within a compressed walking distance, indicated in blue as a "Five-Minute Diamond".

Civic Crossroads

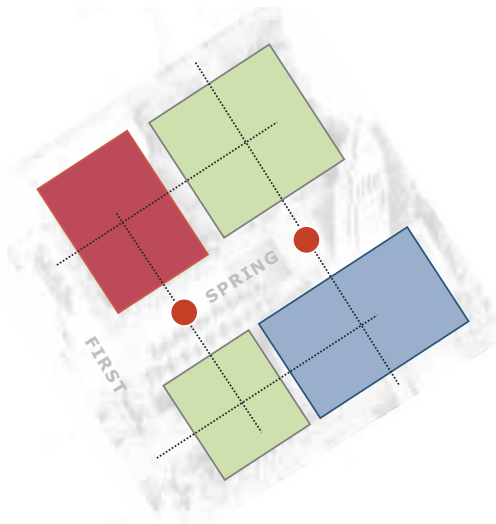
Defining the Civic Crossroads

The Ten-Minute Diamond pinpointed the crossroads of the Civic Center at the rotunda of City Hall. But as we have seen, this location may no longer be feasible, and in any event the center has slightly shifted. We propose a new, four-square definition of the Civic Crossroads as the land framed by Broadway, Main, First and slightly shifted alignment of Temple Street. This zone would have the following characteristics:

- Roughly equal balance of City and County ownership
- A combination of monumental buildings and large public park space
- Excellent access to public transportation
- The terminus of the new Civic Park, with links north on Spring to El Pueblo
- The linking of the Civic Park with the proposed Civic Square at the south lawn of City Hall.

Much of the Crossroads has recently been, or soon will be renovated. This includes the restoration of City Hall and its grounds, the construction of the plaza in front of Police headquarters, the developing plans for the Civic Park, and certain modest improvements of the streetscapes of First, Spring, and Main. The two main missing elements are the old State Office Building site, which is owned by the County and whose future remains uncertain; and the front of County's Criminal Courthouse, which needs to address the new park.

The key to the Civic Crossroads plan is that this zone should be integrally planned and designed, through City and County cooperation, to achieve the most successful public space possible. Separate design initiatives will result in a continuation of the longstanding fragmentation of downtown's public environment. We recommend the following:



The Civic Crossroads: City and County, Green Space and Buildings

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Civic Crossroads

- Create a Civic Crossroads Joint Powers Authority
- Design the Crossroads as Two Parks, Two Halls: Joint-Placemaking by City and County
- New City Hall Entry (with Restaurant and Security) on Spring
- Incorporate Homeland Security Improvements and Funding
- New Design for Civic Square (currently City Hall Park)

A New Civic Square at the South Lawn

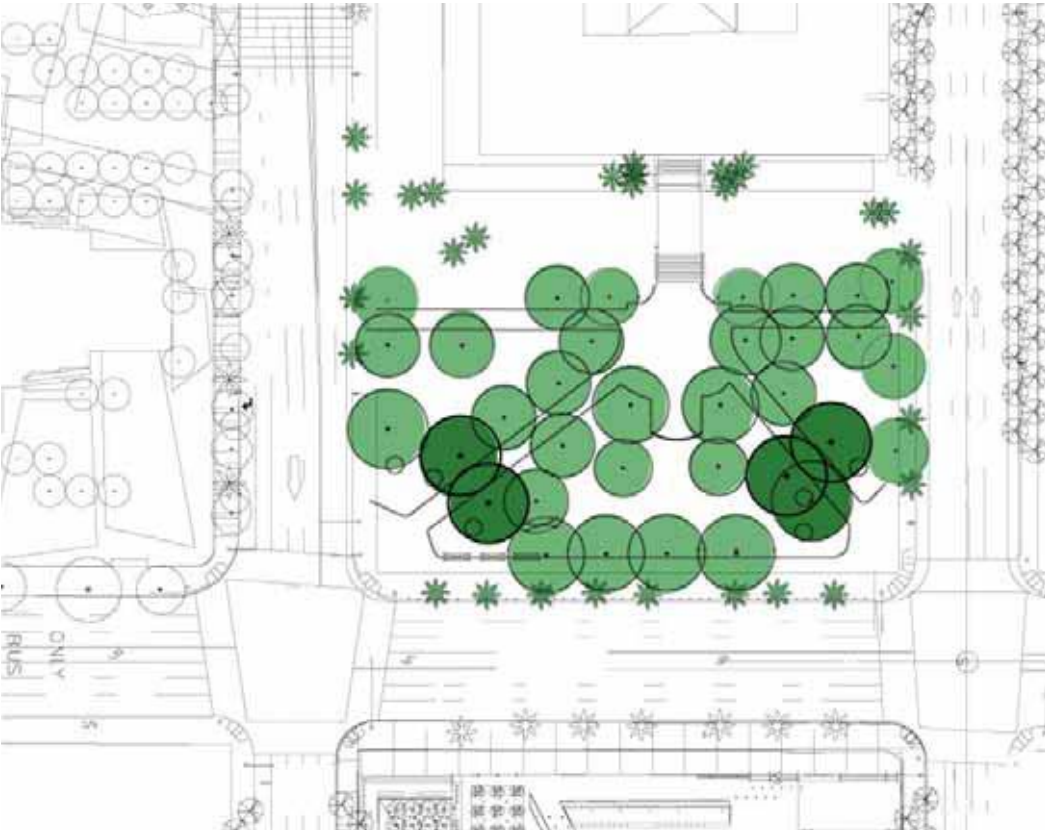
The open space south of Los Angeles' iconic City Hall – known as the “South Lawn” and its frontage on First Street has from the beginning been a setting for important civic activities. The presence of the City Hall is clearly felt here, its narrow and highly articulated south façade, orientation facing the Sun, and sweep of the lawn below accentuate its height and central importance as the seat of government and symbol of the City. This presence has made this location a traditionally favored setting for ceremonies, events and public demonstrations and commemorations of all kinds.

New Neighbors

New surrounding development is creating opportunities for enhancements to the South Lawn that can significantly enrich its role as a vital and central setting for civic life. Fronting the transit corridors of First, Spring and Main Streets, facing the new Caltrans and Police Headquarters complexes and the landmark Los Angeles Times building, the South Lawn of City Hall sits at a nexus of intensified public life. Increasing downtown resident and workforce populations, and visitors to cultural destinations along the First Street corridor will add an around the clock intensity and diversity to pedestrian activity in the immediate area.



Existing City Hill Park
Aerial photo and plan drawing of City Hill Park, also known as the South Lawn of City Hall, showing existing trees and path layout



Civic Crossroads

Enhancement Opportunities

Opportunities for the South Lawn envisioned in this study are aimed at strengthening visual and physical, and symbolic connections with the surrounding urban fabric, enhancing the setting for public assembly and enriching amenities for day to day use.

Site Character

The site is an open lawn of approximately two acres in size, approximately 350' x 250', ascending gently from south east to northwest about five feet to a small central plaza, then to a berm at the base of the City Hall building to the north. The southerly two-thirds of the lawn is heavily planted with a variety of trees, giving way to mostly open lawn with palms toward the City Hall. The trees of the site (most of which were probably planted in the years immediately following World War II) include in addition to the palms, jacaranda, floss silk, redwood, and an array of ficus, most notably two pair of monumental banyans at the south east and south west entrances at Main and Spring Streets. Commemorative plaques, sculpture and monuments are dispersed throughout the site, surrounding a large marble monument fountain on the central plaza commemorating California Senator Frank Putnam Flint (1869-1911), honored for his work in securing Federal funding for the Los Angeles Aqueduct, resulting in a reliable water supply for the City- the crucial ingredient of its growth in the 20th Century.

Exceptional Trees

The trees of the South Lawn include iconic, signature palms and banyans, along with more locally common ficus and jacaranda, most of which as noted above were probably planted in the 1950's era. The trees are in various conditions of vigor and appearance, and must be managed to provide for removal and or relocation and

(OPPOSITE)
Existing Trees in City Hall Park



Civic Crossroads

replacement to accommodate growth of signature trees over time – e.g.: the landmark banyans - and to provide for enhanced sightlines and changing patterns of use.

Circulation

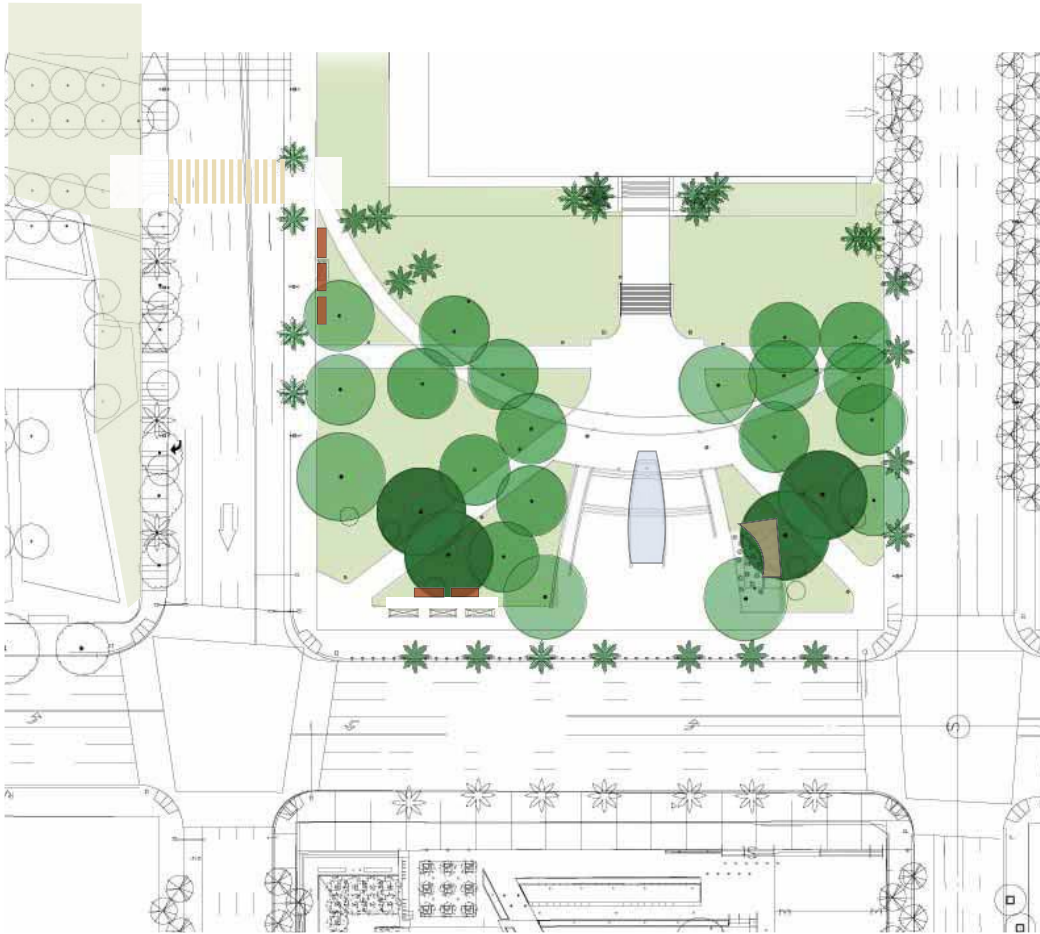
The site is surrounded and currently accessible on three sides by principal downtown street corridors: First Street on the south; Main Street on the east; and Spring Street on the west. Additional pathways are proposed to be overlaid on the existing circulation system to accommodate and encourage new patterns of pedestrian movement into and through the center of the site. These pathways are: 1) a new central link into the lawn from First Street, consisting of broad stepped terraces flanked by sloped walkways; 2) a new curved walk from Spring Street from the northwest; and 3) a new curved walk from Main Street on the northeast.

Public Performance and Discourse

The South Lawn has a history as the site of public assembly, accommodating both planned and spontaneous events- ranging in scale from a few dozens to a few hundreds, to gatherings of many thousands of people, centered on the Lawn and spilling into the surrounding streets. The site's traditional role as a place of regular planned and periodic unforeseen public assembly must be acknowledged and addressed in the planning and design of all enhancements, including access, sight lines, lighting, security, and safety features.

The Lawn

Southern exposure with ample sunlight through the tree canopy, sloping topography and well drained native soils create conditions allowing a vigorous turf that can be managed to accommodate moderate to heavy use. The enhancements envisioned replace approximately fifteen



Proposed Civic Square

Plan of proposed Civic Square with new paths linking to the proposed Civic Park, a new water feature integrated to the existing Flint fountain, proposed cafe pavilion near south-east corner of site and enhanced transit amenities at Main and Spring Street edges

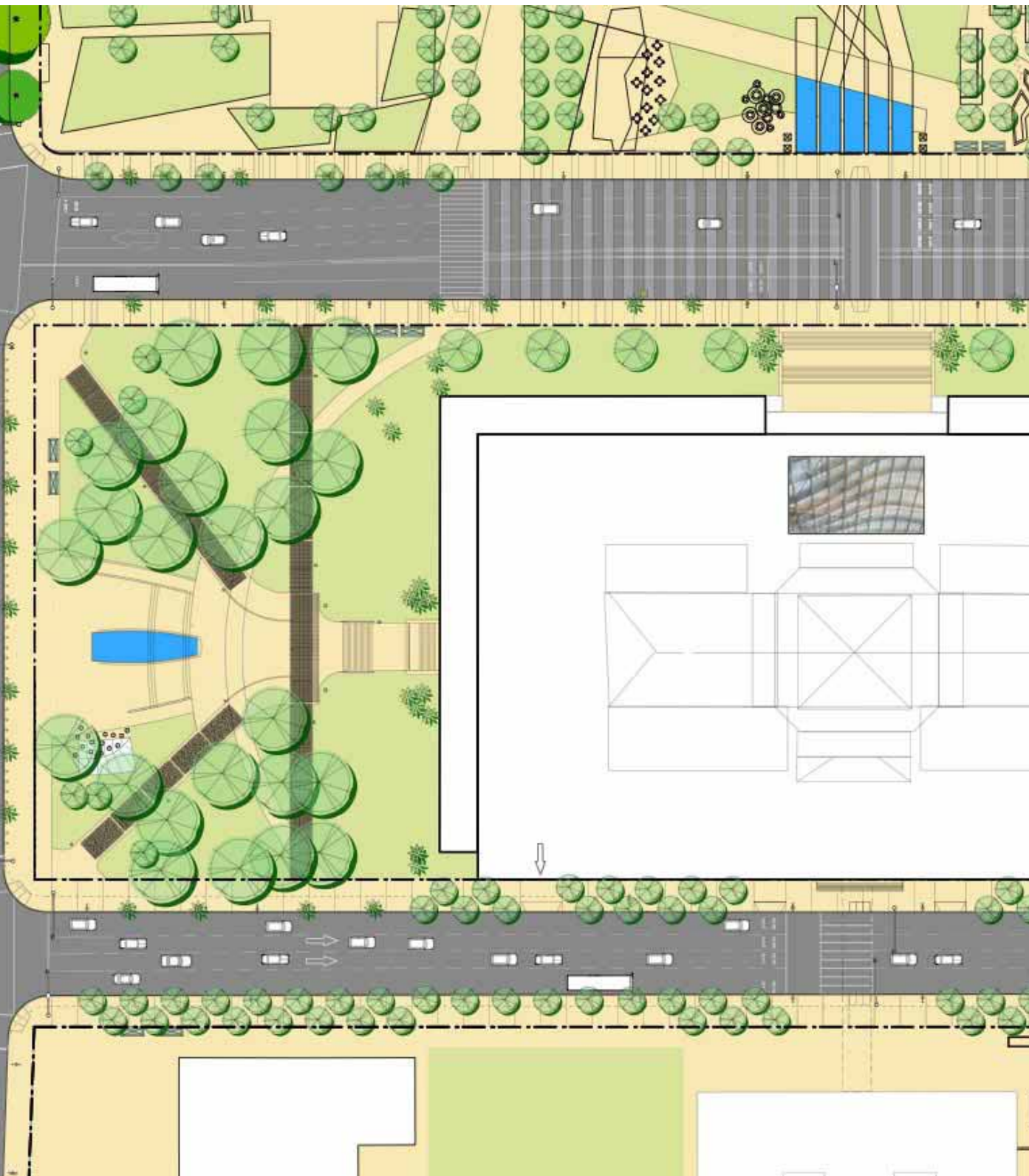


Sketch rendering of proposed Civic Square looking north from First Street showing the proposed water feature in the foreground, the proposed cafe pavilion at the bottom right, and a series of terraces leading to City Hall in the distance

Civic Crossroads

Proposed Plan of Civic Square and Police Headquarters Block





Civic Crossroads

percent of the existing lawn area with mostly permeable surfaced new paved path and assembly terraces.

Public Art/Memorials/Sculpture

The familiar but fundamental story of the bringing of water to make the City is celebrated, as it is in Rome, in many places throughout our metropolis. Here in this highly symbolic location, the Flint Fountain and the surrounding “oasis” of the South Lawn commemorates a key episode in the story. The monumental fountain and memorial honoring Senator Frank Flint presents both thematic and physical opportunities for further commemoration and enhancement of the entire Square. It is located on the present south lawn terrace on the central north south alignment of City Hall, but it can be argued that its configuration, elevation and distance from the Street do not now positively contribute to the South Lawn nor to its overall relationship with First Street and the larger urban setting. Ideas have been advanced for the enhancement of this memorial involving greater physical connections and engagement with the surrounding space. This study proposes a design concept for the South Lawn that includes contemporary re-envisioning of the Flint Monument as a presentation and meditation on this theme - in conjunction with and informing the civic discourse that takes place here. The monument is transformed into a series of stepped sheets of flowing water- facing and engaging changing angles of sunlight throughout the day and the seasons.



Proposed Civic Square

Two views showing proposed transformation of City Hall Park into civic Square. Existing Flint Fountain is expanded with a pool; a new cafe pavilion is located to the right.



Civic Crossroads

Café Pavilion

The success of the Square can only be assured if security, maintenance and provision of amenities of the highest level can be provided. Consideration of the provision of pavilions or kiosks (either permanent or portable and periodic) for food and drink, newspapers and media access and general information should be incorporated into the planning and design. This concept proposes the incorporation of a café pavilion located adjacent to the central terrace and First Street as an animating presence and amenity for the site.

Police Headquarters and Surrounding Streets

The public rights of way of the street corridors surrounding the site including the Police Headquarters block provide for the most part, the opportunity for the introduction of generously wide sidewalks above a soil sub-grade that will accommodate large scale street trees. Double, and where possible triple off-set rows of street trees are considered desirable.



Park Pavilions

(TOP AND LEFT BOTTOM)

Views of pavilions in Bryant Park in New York City.

(RIGHT RIGHT)

Restaurant pavilion incorporated into the design of Maguire Gardens at the Central Library, Los Angeles; the Gardens are comparable in scale to the proposed Civic Square.

Civic Crossroads

Transit Facilities

The Civic Crossroads zone and its surroundings has perhaps the highest intensity bus use anywhere in Los Angeles County. Metro rail stations are located somewhat further away, at First and Hill, First and Alameda, and at Union Station. Buses, bikes and walking constitute the primary form of transit beyond the private automobile. The Civic Crossroads should have upgraded bus facilities throughout. This would include not only ornamental shelters under the City's street furniture program, but ample lighting, signage, maps and maintenance.



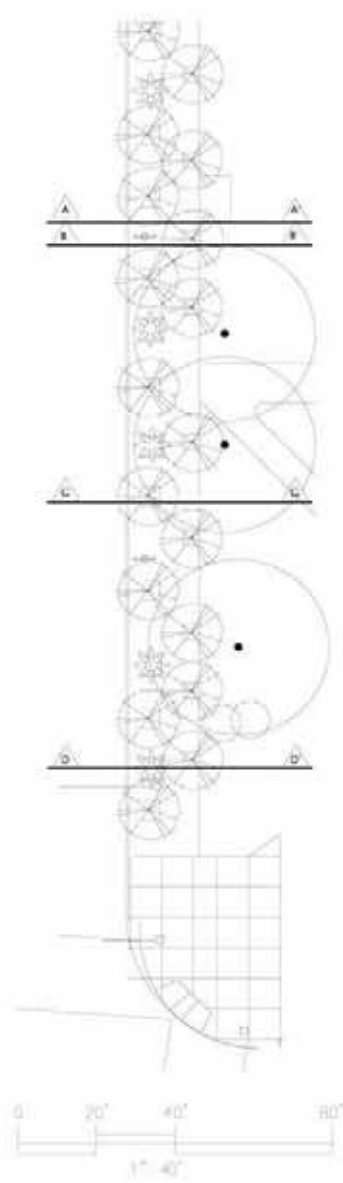
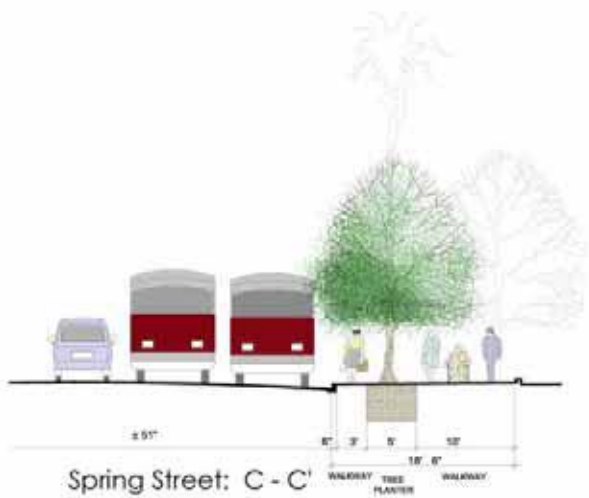
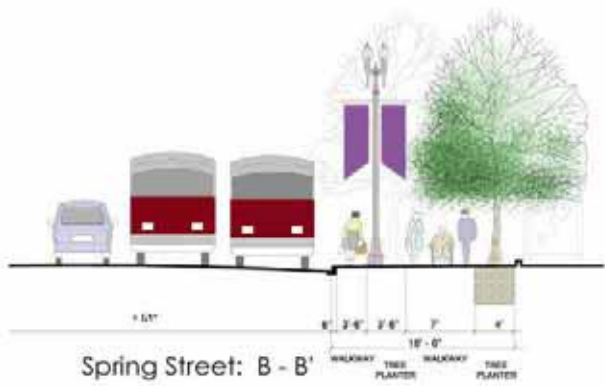
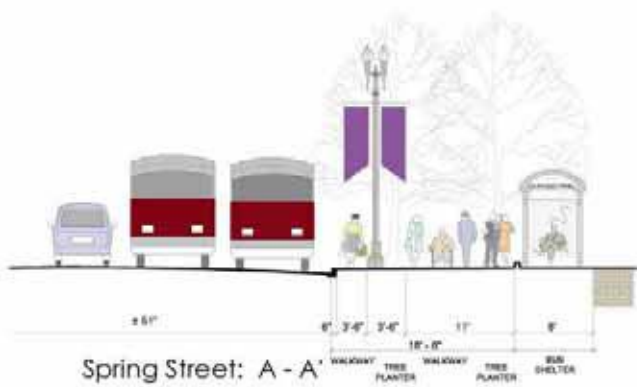
Existing Enhanced Shelters

Below: Spring Street southbound

Right: Spring Street northbound

Below right: First Street westbound





Relocation of new shelters and upgrade of bus facilities along First Street at southern edge of park and Spring Street edge including lighting, landscaping, paving, signage & maps

Civic Crossroads

Concept for City Hall's West Portico

The West Steps, Portico and Courtyard are among the most beautiful features of Los Angeles City Hall. They were designed to serve as an unforgettable entry sequence, adorned with inscriptions, carved stone, ornamental metalwork, elegant vaulted arches, and bronze doors, leading directly to the central rotunda. This grouping is arguably the very centerpiece of the Civic Crossroads.

Unfortunately, the west entrance is now closed to the public for security reasons. However, as an indicator of its symbolic power, the public could not be held back at the inauguration of Mayor Villaraigosa, when hundreds of guests swept up the steps into the courtyard (see photo below left).

This concept seeks to address the security issues by proposing a secure entry route along the sides of the courtyard, and by covering the courtyard with a glass roof to create a public restaurant/cafe overlooking the axis to Bunker Hill and the new Civic Garden.

On the following page are examples of classical courtyards and arcades which have been renovated, covered, and even enclosed to provide modern amenities to the public.



Breaking the Barrier

City Hall's main entrance has been officially closed to the public since September, 2001, but that didn't prevent an enthusiastic crowd of supporters from sweeping up through the portico during the 2005 inaugural parade for Mayor Villaraigosa.



Civic Crossroads

Porticoes and Courtyards
Covered and Re-Used



(OPPOSITE) Classical Courtyards and Glass Roofs

The west portico and courtyard of Los Angeles City Hall draws from classical prototypes, many of which are used as outdoor or covered rooms (TOP LEFT & RIGHT). Modern skylit roofs are often added (BOTTOM LEFT) including the new roof at the courtyard of the National Museum of American Art (BOTTOM RIGHT).

(BELOW) Re-Use of Porticos



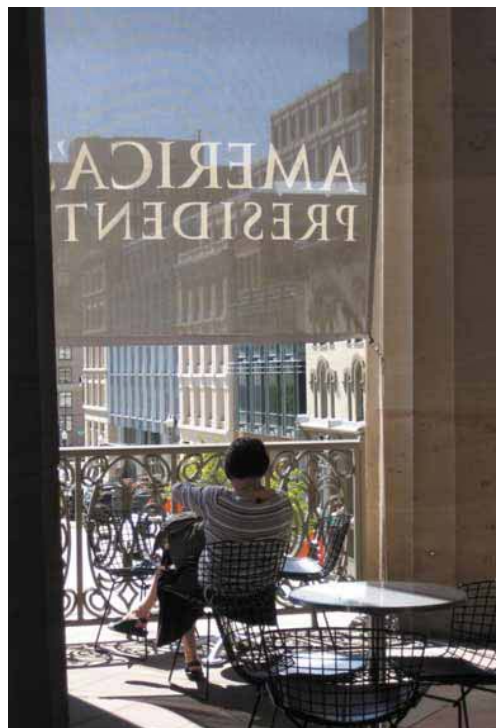
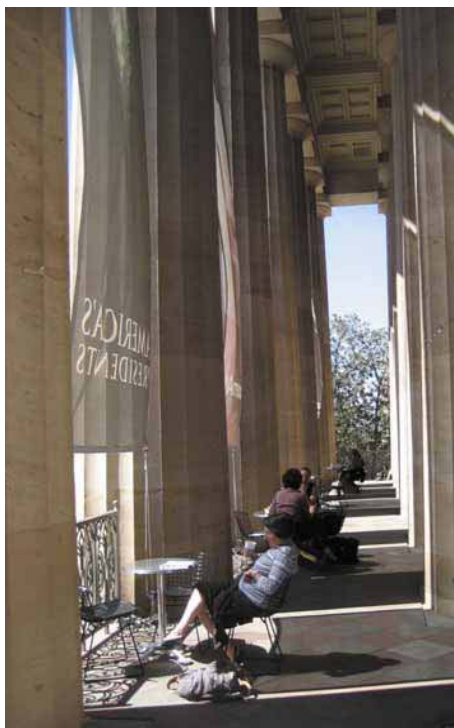
City Hall (Los Angeles) - Arcade along northern edge of west courtyard and portico



The Louvre (Paris) - An arcade comparable to City Hall in width and height which has been covered into a highly successful cafe and restaurant



National Museum of American Art (Washington D.C.) - Arcade has been transformed into an outdoor cafe, and is used for receptions; seating area offers dramatic views of surrounding cityscape.



Civic Crossroads

Concept for West Portico

A reconfiguration could address security concerns, reopen the entry, enclose the courtyard, and create a dramatic new space overlooking the Civic Park.

COVERING CITY HALL COURTYARD

The Courtyard is occasionally covered for special events; it could be covered permanently with an elegant glass roof, making it much more usable and versatile. It has been reported that architect Albert C. Martin Jr. actually proposed such a solution in the 1980's.



PUTTING THE FRONT ARCADE TO USE

The front arcade, with its five vaulted archways, would make an ideal setting for comfortable seating, as part of a cafe or restaurant seating, or as a lobby space.





Security Along the Side Aisles

Building security and screening could be handled in a reliable but welcoming manner along the side aisles of the courtyard, before visitors actually enter the building through the bronze and glass doors.



Views to the Civic Park and Music Center

Entrance and exiting could be organized on the two side aisles of the portico; the three center arches could be glassed in for a seating area, with dramatic views across Spring Street to the new Civic Park and all the way up Bunker Hill to the DWP Building terminating the park axis.