basketball courts and libraries and green spaces ... [that] are not even a little bit open to the public."

The city can prevent these type developments by changing the standards of the zoning code to require that buildings interface with the sidewalk through street oriented development and designs that improve the walking experience. Zoning can encourage ground floor retail and windows, and require that doors be main streets and not only by parking. The city can also pass laws that protect historical buildings from redevelopment that would alter their facades. Historical buildings add character to a street and in many cases are the defining landmarks of neighborhoods.



Rendering of future Broadway Street streetscape<sup>133</sup>

#### Street Vending

Street vending creates an active street life by bringing food and culture to the public realm. However, under current city laws street vending is illegal in Los Angeles. The following

quote from Mark Vallianatos' "A More Delicious City" sums up the benefits that sidewalk vending has on walkability:

Legal sidewalk vending can improve the vitality and walkability of cities by giving people a reason to walk and be outside. Increasing the number of people out on city sidewalks can also make neighborhoods safer by ensuring more eyes on the street, and may have a positive spillover effect on local stores as more people are out strolling and shopping.<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the benefits for walkability, street vending has the potential to create jobs and provide healthier foods into low-income food deserts. Legalizing street vending would turn this illegal activity, already taking place across the city, into a regulated and taxable industry that will draw more people into the streets to enjoy Los Angeles. Vallianatos argues that it is time to create a city-wide permit system to allow vendors to sell on sidewalks and in parks, with rules to allow pedestrian passage.<sup>135</sup>

#### Pedestrian Wayfinding

An interesting project that Los Angeles Walks has been working on as part of their *Hey*, *I'm Walking Here* campaign is signage for pedestrians. The goal of their wayfinding project is to give information on walking times between different destinations to show neighborhood connectivity and change perceptions that many places are to far away to walk. Below is a concept design of what their signage would look like. Studies have shown that listing travel times instead of distance encourages more people to make a trip on foot.<sup>136</sup> Another wayfinding project that has already been implemented in Pontevedra, Spain are pedestrian maps similar to subway maps that show how far city landmarks are in distance and time. The second picture below is an example of one of their signage design. Los Angeles Walks should look into creating these subway style maps, without showing distances, for Downtown to give an overview of the walking environment.



Los Angeles Walks concept sign for pedestrian way finding<sup>137</sup>



Subway inspired pedestrian maps Pontevedra, Spain<sup>138</sup>

#### Pick Your Winners/ Funding

To reiterate what Speck states in his last step, "Where can spending the least amount of money make the most difference?"<sup>139</sup>. Downtown should prioritize walkability improvements for quick and low cost projects that can have an immediate impact. These are projects like parklets, temporary pedestrian only zones, sidewalk seating and interim sidewalk widening. These provisional "design strategies allow cities to assess the impacts of their intended project in real time and realize their benefits faster than typical processes allow."<sup>140</sup> If a project is received well it can become permanent over time, or altered for very little cost to meet design suggestions from the community. Below is a design for sidewalk widening using interim materials such as epoxied gravel, planter beds, and bollards. Broadway Street has already utilized interim sidewalk

widening from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Street to gauge public opinion and give community members an adjustment period before the sidewalk is permanently expanded. Most of the recommendations collected from my survey on how respondents would improve their walking experience in Downtown included low cost suggestions such as wider sidewalks, more places to sit, more trees, etc. (Appendix A Q18).



Interim sidewalk widening from NACTO Street Design Guide<sup>141</sup>

Most of the funding for pedestrian projects in Downtown comes from the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT). LADOT has an annual budget of \$526,350,200 (FY2013-2014) with most funds going towards the automobile. Out of this budget \$7-10 million is allocated annually for pedestrian and bicycle projects.<sup>142</sup> LADOT funds programs such as the People St program, which is responsible for creating parklets and pedestrian-only plazas in the city. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is the primary agency responsible for planning, funding, and operating transportation in Los Angeles County. Metro has an annual operating budget of \$4.5 billion but only allocates 1 percent of funds towards pedestrian and bicycle projects across the entire county.<sup>143</sup> Metro funds pedestrian projects like First Mile-Last Mile and Safe Routes to School (Strategic plan by the city to makes safe routes to school by enhancing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure). Both of these public agencies receive a majority of their funding from Proposition A, C and Measure R local sales tax. Measure R2, the proposed measure for 2016 ballot would set aside 3 percent of each rail development budget (\$810m total) towards first mile-last mile infrastructure. It would also allow 5 percent of local return funds (\$1.1bn) to be used for pedestrian and bicycle investment. In order to raise sufficient funding for pedestrian infrastructure improvements the public needs to support measures and propositions, like Measure R2, that dedicate a large amount of capital towards walkability improvement. The city can also qualify for additional state and federal funding by expanding programs like Safe Routes to School. Official pedestrian counts conducted by the city should also be a priority. Deborah Murphy, Director of Los Angeles Walks, adds that funding can be acquired simply by "Knowing how many people are walking in an area like downtown."<sup>144</sup> Funding can also come from local businesses. As mentioned earlier, parking benefit districts are an effective way for neighborhoods to create a constant revenue stream for street improvements. The creation of business improvements districts, which are defined areas within which businesses pay an additional tax (or levy), can also provide funding for pedestrian enhancement. Business owners who recognize the advantageous of increased pedestrian activity, an increasing trend in Downtown, will willingly tax themselves to create walkable streets.

When it comes to funding and making change there are so many different agencies involved that the process becomes overly complicated and drawn own. This is why the city should establish a positive working relationship between the various offices and organizations that shape the city. This will make the process of improving streets much more time and cost efficient.

#### Street Redesign

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As a part of this project I worked with Los Angeles Walks, a community based advocacy group with the goal of making "walking safe, accessible and fun for all Angelenos."<sup>145</sup> They helped me identify the portion of West 8<sup>th</sup> Street between Figueroa Street and Main Street as a target area in need of improvement. This street was selected because it has many components of a walkable street such mixed uses, continuity of buildings, density, etc. Similar to many other neighborhoods in Downtown, this street has the potential of becoming a popular destination for pedestrian activity if a few components are added. It is critical that walkability improvements are applied to streets that already have walk appeal. Speck explains "A shockingly large amount of money is currently being spent adding walkability enhancements to streets that will never attract [pedestrians] ... to give an obvious example, a container depot is not a place to encourage sidewalk dining."<sup>146</sup> Below I will outline my recommendations for a street redesign of this portion of West 8<sup>th</sup> Street. This redesign was created using information from interviews, surveys, and my twelve guideline. Each street Downtown has distinct characteristics that need to be taken into consideration when changes are applied. This redesign should function as a guideline or blueprint that can be modified for other street redesigns throughout the city.

The seven and a half blocks I am focusing on run through the heart of Downtown Los Angeles. Sections of this street pass through the Historic Core and the Financial District. There is a large mix of uses in the area including residential, commercial, and office space. This street also attracts a mixture of people including workers, residents, and visitors. This portion of West 8<sup>th</sup> Street intersects with major roadways like Broadway St. and Spring St. that are areas with high concentrations of pedestrian activity. West 8th Street has many components of walkability including a continuity of buildings that come up to the sidewalk and a mix of uses, but it lacks the feel and culture of a truly inviting environment. Below is a picture from Google maps

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showing the streets location in relation to the surrounding blocks. The following picture represents the spatial dimensions of the majority of blocks I examined on West 8<sup>th</sup> Street. In its current configuration the street spans an average of 80 feet from the building facade of one side of the street to the building line of the other. Most of the street contains four lanes that all go in the same direction. As the West 8<sup>th</sup> approaches Figueroa Street it expands to five traffic lanes with one parking lane on the left side. For a majority of this street there are very wide parking lanes on each side that double as traffic lanes, however there is no a clear marking of their separation. The sidewalks are moderately wide averaging around 12 feet, including street amenities such as lighting and signage. There are also no marked bicycle lanes on either side of the street.





Existing street infrastructure

The first place to start when addressing the pedestrian dimension of the street should be the sidewalks. According to the design manual for living streets created by the UCLA Center for Innovation, an area with mixed uses should favor the pedestrian and frontage zones.<sup>147</sup> Below is a picture of what the design manual recommends for a street like West 8<sup>th</sup>. Priority should be given to the pedestrian and frontage zone because these are the areas that will be most utilized by pedestrians and businesses. The average sidewalk on this portion of West 8<sup>th</sup> Street is around 12 feet, which matches the guideline minimum width of 12 feet for mixed-use streets.<sup>148</sup> I believe that the sidewalks would benefit from an increase in width by a few feet giving restaurants and pedestrians ample space for walking and outdoor seating. Another important aspect of the sidewalks is maintaining their condition. Upon visiting this area I was struck by how dirty and



unkept the sidewalks appeared. Currently, under Los Angeles law it is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner to maintain the sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.<sup>149</sup> I believe property owners should be held to a higher standard by the city and community, when maintaining their stretches of sidewalk. Having a city official visit these streets to determine if the sidewalks meet certain cleanliness standards can achieve this goal. If standards are not maintained warnings will be given out, and eventually fines if property owners do not comply. As noted in the Los Angeles Mobility Plan for 2035 "properly maintained streetscapes are essential to making livable neighborhoods and creating streets that are welcoming to people."<sup>150</sup> Cleaning and maintaining the sidewalks is something that does not require much time and effort but has large impact on how the street is perceived.

It is also critical to address the safety and comfort of sidewalks. One of the most important roles of the sidewalk is to separate and protect pedestrians from vehicles. For this reason I plan to keep on-street parking on both sides of the street and remove anti-gridlock zoning. I would also recommend a consistent lining of trees on the sidewalk creating a "continuous canopy". There are a large number of Fiscus trees on this street that should be replaced with trees that will not damage the sidewalk. I would recommend the species Robinia Ambigua, also known as the 'Purple Robe' tree. This species is drought tolerant, has nondamaging roots, and is approved by the Bureau of Street Services.<sup>151</sup> Adding trees to this street would increase shade, enhance aesthetic appeal, and reduce car speeds. Ensuring that pedestrians have effective crosswalk markings is another crucial aspect of walking safety. I would recommend that all intersections on my blocks adopt the continental design because research indicates that it is most visible to drivers.<sup>152</sup> There are also many portions of this street that do not have adequate lighting. According to my survey results many respondents felt that the streets they walk on are not adequately lit at night (Appendix A Q11). Adding lighting in appropriately spaced intervals that would ensure that streets are sufficiently is key factor for encouraging people to walk streets at night. Adding benches and street furniture would also make the street more comfortable and inviting for pedestrians.

One of the more ambitious goals for this street redesign would be the addition of a small park at the intersection of West 8<sup>th</sup> and Main St.. The picture below outlines the area in blue that would be converted into a park. Currently this area is occupied by a large surface parking lot. This location is desirable because the closest park, Hope Street Park, is over five blocks away. This green space would foster social interaction, give people a place to come relax, and create an attraction that would draw people from the pedestrian heavy Spring St.



There are also other large parking lots on this portion of street that create holes in the urban fabric. To address this issue I would add thin layer of buildings at the street front of each of these parking lots. Parking would still be available behind the businesses but hidden from public view. In the picture below I have outlined in red all of the surface parking lot on my portion of street (excluding the one I converted to a park). Adding building facades would make walking by these lots a much more enjoyable experience and also create businesses that would give people more reasons to use the street.



Pedestrians on this street would also benefit from the addition of protected bike lanes. Currently this section of street lacks designated bike lanes leaving bikers to fend for themselves among traffic. Installing protected bike lanes would reduce traffic speeds and also work to resize the oversized parking/traffic lanes on this street. I would add one bike lane on each side protected by the on street parking and a lane of planted trees. The result would look similar to the picture below but with opposite direction bike lanes on each side of the street.



The street itself would most benefit by having lanes of traffic going both ways. One-way streets encourage higher speeds thus creating a more dangerous environment for pedestrians and bikers. Furthermore, one-ways are detrimental to the economy of Downtown businesses because they distribute vitality unevenly. People do most of their shopping on the evening path home leaving some streets completely devoid of business in the later hours of the day. <sup>153</sup> My recommendation would be to introduce a road diet, reducing the street to one-traffic lane in each direction with a center turn lane where necessary. The additional benefits of a road diet are that it frees up space to expand the sidewalk and add bike lanes.

Access to sufficient transit is another key element to a successful street. Good transit depends on the quality of the pedestrian environment because virtually all transit riders are pedestrians.<sup>154</sup> By implementing the recommendations I introduced earlier when addressing walkability, this street will consequently become more transit friendly. To add to this I would also enhance the infrastructure of the bus stops. Almost all the bus stops on my street lack seating and shelter, leaving pedestrians standing by the street side. To address this I would add transit stop shelters and seating to protect pedestrians from the elements while giving them a place to rest. To provide access to the bus from the sidewalk I would remove on-street parking at transit stops and have the sidewalk and bike lanes cross over. The nearest metro station is located at 7<sup>th</sup> and Flower Street. This station connects to both bus and metro lines giving people the opportunity to travel throughout Los Angeles. To make this transit more accessible I would install signage similar to the Los Angeles Walk wayfinding design to give pedestrian estimated walking times to the nearest Metro stops and stations.

Below is the picture of my final street redesign. If my changes were to be implemented there would be a continuity of buildings on the street front without breaks in the urban fabric. The sidewalks would be widened by two feet on each side, allowing more room for pedestrians and the street furniture of bottom floor businesses. The sidewalks would be lined with Purple Robe trees every thirty to thirty five feet creating a continuous canopy that protect pedestrians from cars and provides shade. The sidewalk would also contain benches, lighting, bus shelters, and signage directing people to the nearest Metro stops. Directly off of the curb would be a fivefoot bike lane, one on each side of the street with each going in a different direction. The bike lanes would be separated from the street by a planting strip of additional Purple Robe trees. On the other side of the planting strip would be a seven-foot wide parking lane, acting as extra protection for cyclist and pedestrians. In the middle of the street there would be one driving lane in each direction with a center turn lane at intersections and side streets. Not pictured is the

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addition of a park at 8<sup>th</sup> and Main St. My recommendations should be applied to streets throughout Downtown that would benefit most from walkability enhancements. Changes should be made with strategically, with community input, to create a walkable network of streets within Downtown.



Existing street configuration West 8th St



Street redesign West 8th St

#### **Conclusion**

Los Angeles now stands at a crossroads. It is in the midst of profound redefining of its post war identity, dominated by suburban style, civic development and transportation. The "third Los Angeles" as Hawthorne would refer to it, is moving towards a more progressive urban landscape. Initiatives and programs across the city, aimed at bringing life back into the streets are a testament to a public that has become increasingly supportive of an active public realm. Streets that were once dominated by cars and congestion between the 1950s and early 2000s are beginning to show signs of "human" life. The pedestrian or "canary in the coalmine of urban livability" according to Speck, is becoming increasingly present in the urban streetscape. Neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles are executing projects to repurpose streets, taking away space from cars and creating space for people.

Downtown has been and will continue to be a pioneer for progressive urban planning practices. As one of the few places in the city with substantial vertical density, mix of uses, and sufficient public transportation, Downtown offers a glimpse of a possible future for a Los Angeles that has run out of room to sprawl. As Downtown works to reanimate its public sphere, walkability remains a priority for many public officials and community members. Some neighborhoods have already made substantial progress, as streets such as Broadway and Spring continue to prioritize pedestrian enhancements. By continuing these efforts and renovating streets that have hidden walking potential, Downtown can create an expansive network of walkability. Downtown can become the model, demonstrating to other communities around Los Angeles that improving walkability is the key to developing neighborhoods that are healthy, sustainable, active, safe, and successful.

#### Appendix A



## 2. What is your gender?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male		31	62%
2	Female		19	38%
	Total		50	100%

## 3. What is your relationship with Downtown Los Angeles? (Check all that apply)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Resident	11	22%
2	Employee	4	8%
3	Visitor	35	70%
	Total	50	100%

### 4. On an average day how far do you walk in Downtown?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	05 mile		24	49%
2	.5-1mile		11	22%
3	+1mile		14	29%
	Total		49	100%

# 5. How far do you have to walk to access public transit from your residence or workplace?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	05 mile	26	53%
2	.5-1 mile	11	22%
3	+1 mile	12	24%
	Total	49	100%

# 6. Do you feel safe walking alone in Downtown during the day?

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#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	45	92%
2	No	4	8%
	Total	49	100%

### 7. If no, why?

Text Response	
large number of jails and homeless	
crime	
Its not suburbia	
drugs and crime rate	

# StatisticValue8. Do you feel safe walking alone in Downtown during the<br/>night?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		24	49%
2	No		25	51%
	Total		49	100%

## 9. If no, why?

Text Response
Old men that try and hit on you
Depends if there are other people out on the street such as attending an event, then I am okay.
Depends on where you walk, little Tokoyo OK, Staples yes, other places no.
Homeless
If there are lots of people around then I feel safe at night but if I am alone then I get a bit tense. I'm
afraid of being jumped
As a woman I often feel harassed by many men.
Not enough people on streets
Large number of jails and homeless
I feel that I would be safe in certain parts of DTLA, particularly those with a lot of
people/businesses. However, for other parts, I would not feel safe in certain areas with less people
and more abandoned buildings because I feel like I may get robbed and/or mugged.
Gang activity
Not enough people on streets, homeless, drug addicts
Lack of pedestrian activity
The streets are not well lit at all.
Crime and being female
Afraid of men
Too many homeless
Lack of security
I'm a woman.
Drugs and crime
Homeless people, drug activity
Not many people on the streets at night and many homeless
Pedestrian dead zones
Not enough police, certain areas do not have enough people
Homeless

# 10. Are you able to complete useful tasks (shopping, eating, working) by walking in Downtown?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Always or usually	33	67%
2	About half the time	13	27%
3	Seldom or never	3	6%
	Total	49	100%

11. Are the suewarks adequately lighted for use at light?				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Always or usually		16	33%
2	About half the time		31	65%
3	Seldom or never		1	2%
	Total		48	100%

### 11. Are the sidewalks adequately lighted for use at night?

#### 12. Are there areas that need additional crosswalks?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		17	36%
2	No		30	64%
	Total		47	100%

### 13. If yes, where?

-	
Text Response	
Near construction sites	
Eastern part of DTLA	
Every mid block should have a crossing	
Longer blocks	
Just a few places like by 6th and Wilshire	
Halfway between intersections on Spring and Main	
Near market places and parks	
All long blocks	

# 14. Are the sidewalks in good condition?

		8		
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Always or usually		19	39%
2	About half the time		28	57%
3	Seldom or never		2	4%
	Total		49	100%

# **15.** Are the sidewalks wide enough for seating and two adults to walk side by side?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Always or usually	19	39%
2	About half the time	22	45%
3	Seldom or never	8	16%
	Total	49	100%

# 16. Are there benches or other places to rest along the sidewalks you use in DTLA?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Always or usually	9	18%
2	About half the time	16	33%
3	Seldom or never	24	49%
	Total	49	100%

17. Are there trees along the streets where you walk in DTLA?				
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Always or usually		8	16%
2	About half the time		26	53%
3	Seldom or never		15	31%
	Total		49	100%

# 18. If you could improve anything about your walking experience in DTLA what would you do? (ex. wider sidewalks, more trees, pedestrian only districts, etc)

#### Text Response

More places to sit Wider sidewalks, change one way streets to two way, better wayfinding More parking at reasonable rates if not free. More public transit to DTLA as not frequent or fast from the West Valley, Stores open more, more police on street- never see them Increase in trees or other features to provide shade. More regular cleaning of sidewalks and streets. Segways Have a few small quiet parks away from the sound of traffic. Interconnect isolated pedestrian areas without using cars. Wider sidewalks, more trees, more shops and entertainment options Wider sidewalks, more trees/ plants, more resting areas Add sky bridges over streets for pedestrians, this would reduce traffic, and make it safer for pedestrians to cross streets. If I could change one thing it would be the constant smell of urine but that is difficult to control. Removing "anti-gridlock zone" driving hours for rush hour driving. We need 24 hour on-street car parking, it's a pedestrian amentiy to keep cars at lower speeds. When we remove street parking, we make our local roads turn into freeways. More trees and more places to sit. More trees, less trash, less homeless people. more protected right-hand turns so pedestrians dont hold up traffic Wider sidewalks, more trees, cleaner. More bus stops Pedestrian only sections More trees and more public bathrooms More places to sit, more shade and trees, awnings, more cross walks with more time to cross Better maintained sidewalks I would put more trees and lighting. I think pedestrian only districts would be very much needed because like many parts of LA, the structure of the streets and businesses caters more to car drivers and not pedestrians or bikers. More mid block crossings, and more trees Wider sidewalks, more trees, pedestrian only districts, easier access to public transit with more visibility Wider, cleaner, better lit, better maintained sidewalks with curb bump outs and mid block crossings Wider sidewalks, more places to sit, more pedestrian only districts More lighting. More trashcans to avoid overflow. Find housing for the absurd number of homeless people on the streets. More trees, less trash/more trashcans More security and lighting More trees Wider sidewalks More trees More activity during the night Addition of green spaces and more sidewalk dining

All of the above, sure! Pedestrian only districts, more police presence pedestrian only districts would be great and also more trees More trees, less bums Bike paths Eliminate anti gridlock zoning, add bikes land especially on three lane streets (Flower + Figueroa), Have on street parking to buffer pedestrians wider sidewalks More green space and public spaces road diets, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and parklets More nighttime businesses (bars, restaurants, etc) and more trees more parks and shaded seating more security at night

#### **End Notes**

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<sup>17</sup> Nivola, Pietro S., Laws of the Landscape : How Policies Shape Cities in Europe and America. Washington, DC, USA: Brookings Institution Press, 1999. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 16 February 2015.

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