

http://www.ladowntownnews.com/news/six-key-issues-facing-downtown-in/article_a5e106d2-d1db-11e6-8940-ef200a3d3ad5.html

FEATURED

News

Six Key Issues Facing Downtown in 2017

By Eddie Kim Jan 6, 2017



Downtown is seeing more young families, but a lack of conveniently located schools. One of the few choices is Metro Charter Elementary in South Park.

photo by Gary Leonard

DTLA - Downtown Los Angeles is enjoying a period of wild growth, with a seemingly endless stream of new buildings, businesses and people descending upon the community.

That's good news, but it comes with some challenging side effects. Here are six issues that Downtown needs to address in 2017.

[Get DTLA stories in our daily email newsletter.]



Business Phone Service

Pricing starting from **\$9.95**

Includes:

- Phone System
- Unlimited Calling Nationwide
- 40+ Features

aerio
connect

The Cost of Living: More than 1,600 apartments are currently under construction, according to the Downtown Center Business Improvement District, with 6,000 more in the pipeline. That bodes well for a tight housing market, but rents have yet to drop. It's not uncommon to see prices north of \$4 a square foot, and according to real estate firm Marcus & Millichap, monthly rents in Downtown rose 8.9% over the past year to an average of \$2,245. New Downtown complexes tend to be upscale, with loads of amenities and luxe finishes. A glut of new apartments opening at the same time could mean some landlords offer early tenants sweet deals, but if housing prices stay high, there will be increased complaints, and diversity in the neighborhood will be impacted.

My Kingdom for a Parking Space: While some residents are ditching cars for a transit- and pedestrian-oriented lifestyle, a number of Downtown business owners and commuters are concerned by the shrinking number of parking lots in the Central City. The culprit is all the office buildings and apartment towers rising on said lots. It could be years until many of the projects' parking structures open to the public; until then, visitors must look within a smaller pool of parking, or seek out street spaces, which can mean endless circling of the block. Downtown already has a reputation with outsiders as an expensive, difficult place to park. This could get worse before it gets better.

Surviving Construction: Another side effect of all the construction is that the noise and shuttered sidewalks make life harder for residents and especially businesses that need consistent foot traffic. Sometimes the blame falls on a developer that doesn't maintain a walkway between their project and the road. Other times it's the inconvenience and unpleasant nature of being near dust and activity — who wants to sip a latte outside if a jackhammer is pounding away? If life gets too bothersome, some residents may leave in search of a more peaceful neighborhood.

School's Out: Urban hubs like Downtown tend to be popular with a younger crowd — that's partly why so many of the couples who meet here are starting families. Parents need good schools, and Downtown has too few. Consider the success of Metro Charter Elementary, which opened in September 2013 and has grown a grade each year, with robust enrollment (there has been a wait list) and more than 200 students today. Metro Charter, now based in office space attached to California Hospital Medical Center in South Park, has struggled to find a permanent home in Downtown. In fact, other than some schools on the outskirts of the community, there just aren't many options for parents who put a priority on neighborhood and high academic performance. If Downtown doesn't get more schools, parents will leave for places with better educational options.

Avoiding the Shutter: Some restaurants are closing because a landlord wants to raise rent or prefers a shiny new tenant. Others, however, are victims of too much competition and overwhelmed diners. Here's just a few: Last year saw the closure of chef Bernhard Mairinger's Bierbeisl Imbiss in the Spring Arcade Building, which won rave reviews but not enough of a following (it closed, reopened, and then closed again in the fall). Petty Cash, a second outpost of chef Walter Manzke's Mid-City taco spot, closed abruptly in the Arts District after less than a year. Local Table operated for two years in the Financial District but then lost steam, closing in May. Many more restaurants are slated to open in 2017, but there doesn't seem to be enough diners to support them all.

Homelessness, Continued: Los Angeles' homelessness crisis endures. Many cheered the Nov. 8 voter passage of Proposition HHH, which will fund the construction of 10,000 apartments for the chronically homeless. That long-term plan, however, is little comfort in Downtown and Skid Row especially, with homelessness jumping in recent years. Encampments continue to grow in and around Downtown, with the city moving slowly on issues such as storage for homeless people's belongings and getting long-term care for the mentally ill. The new money in Downtown often makes for an uncomfortable mosh pit where the well-heeled must confront the daily realities of society's poorest and most vulnerable individuals. Will tangible solutions come to light in 2017? Don't hold your breath.

© *Los Angeles Downtown News 2017*