The wind, the traffic and the buildings: the role of the built environment in determining air pollution exposures

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Ultrafine particles are mostly from vehicular emissions. They disappear in around a half an hour: rather than magically going away, they collide and stick to fine particles. As a result, they are highly elevated around roadways compared to everywhere else.
Hotspots in urban areas
Dealing with the mobile data

- Mobile data gives spatially heterogeneous measurements; sometimes you get 30 in one spot, and sometimes one every 20 m.
- Simple averaging of mobile data (after correction for the wandering GPS signal) ends up looking like a trail of confetti after a parade route.
Using a line-reference system

- Divide the street into a grid with reference points every $x$ meters.
  - Each reference point gets 1 value per run. If there are 30 data points, they are averaged. If there are no data points, we interpolate one.
  - This avoids under/overweighting individual “runs” on the route.
At high spatial resolution, mostly see the effects of accelerations around traffic stops.
Need ~20 repeats under similar met conditions to get a reasonable average

Ranasinghe et al. AAQR (2016)
What is the effect of the built environment at the block/neighborhood scale on pollutant concentrations at the street?
Site 1: Street canyon

Olive & 12th Site (Street view: heading to South)
Site 2: One isolated tall building with low traffic

Olive & 12th Site (Street view: heading to North)
Site 3: One isolated tall building with high traffic

Vermont & 7th Site (Street view: heading to West)
Site 4: Intermediate buildings in one side and low buildings in the other side of the street

Wilshire & Carondelet Site (Street view: heading to East)
Site 5: All single story buildings

Temple City & Las Tunas Site (Street view: heading to North)
# Built environment quantitative descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Broadway &amp; 7th (Site1)</th>
<th>Olive St. &amp; 12th St. (Site2)</th>
<th>Vermont &amp; 7th St. (Site3)</th>
<th>Wilshire &amp; Carondelet (Site4)</th>
<th>Temple City &amp; Las Tunas (Site5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong># of buildings</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max. building height (m)</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean building height, $H_{bldg}$ (m)</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bldg area weighted height, $H_{area}$ (m)</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bldg. homogeneity, $H_{area}/H_{bldg}$ (dimensionless)</strong></td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean building ground area ($m^2$)</strong></td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>1,395</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street width (m)</strong></td>
<td>26 (BW) / 22 (7th)</td>
<td>28 (Olive) / 17 (12th)</td>
<td>30 (Ver) / 25 (7th)</td>
<td>17 (Car) / 37 (Wil)</td>
<td>24 (TC) / 30 (LT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simple Aspect ratio ($H_{area}/W_{street}$)</strong></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Block length (m)</strong></td>
<td>190 (BW) / 100 (7th)</td>
<td>180 (Olive) / 95 (12th)</td>
<td>190 (Ver) / 95 (7th)</td>
<td>160 (Car) / 75 (Wil)</td>
<td>175 (TC) / 115 (LT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ratio occupied by bldg.</strong></td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intersection PNC (Stationary) vs. Over the site average PNC (Mobile)

(a) Morning

(b) Afternoon
Higher traffic $\rightarrow$ higher UFP, except at the two sites with extreme built-environments, homogeneous & high or low: the street canyon (Site 1) and the low, flat bldg. canopy (Site 5).

(a) Morning

(b) Afternoon
Best Explanatory Factor in the Morning:

The “Areal Aspect Ratio” =

Length scale of buildings over length scale of open space

\[
Ar_{area} = \frac{H_{bldg}}{L_{diag} \times \left(1 - \sum S_{bldg} / A_{site}\right)} = \frac{H_{bldg}}{L_{diag} \times \left(A_{open} / A_{site}\right)} = \frac{H_{bldg}}{L_{open}}
\]

- \(H_{bldg}\): Mean area-weighted building height
- \(L_{diag}\): Diagonal length of block
- \(S_{bldg}\): Building surface area
- \(A_{site}\): Area of the sampling site
- \(A_{open}\): Area of the open space in sampling site

Choi et al., 2016
Best Explanatory Factor in the Afternoon: Turbulence strength (vertical fluctuations of surface winds, $\sigma_w$)
Best Explanatory Factor in the Afternoon:
Turbulence strength (vertical fluctuations of surface winds, $\sigma_w$)
Appears to be from non-local emissions

![Graph showing correlation between turbulence strength and UFP concentration across different sites.](Image)
The effects of building heterogeneity on turbulence in the afternoon:

Higher building heterogeneity appears to enhance surface turbulence, under conditions with moderate winds and an unstable atmosphere.
Summary for Planners:
Built environment and traffic management design characteristics that influence near-roadway exposures to vehicular pollution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Suggested Direction</th>
<th>Approx. Size of Effect</th>
<th>Atmospheric Conditions &amp; Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Areal aspect ratio ($A_{area}$)</td>
<td>Lower building volumes and more open space result in lower pollutant concentrations.</td>
<td>Up to approximately a factor of three.</td>
<td>Important under calm conditions (in the mornings at our sites). Not critical when the atmosphere is unstable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Heterogeneity</td>
<td>Isolated tall buildings result in lower concentrations than homogeneous shorter or higher buildings with similar volume.</td>
<td>Up to approximately a factor of two.</td>
<td>Important under unstable conditions with moderate winds (afternoons at our sites). Not critical when the atmosphere is stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic flow</td>
<td>Lower traffic flow is better, controlling for fleet mix.</td>
<td>At a given location, concentrations are roughly proportional to traffic flow.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Summary for Planners:
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<td>Traffic Management</td>
<td>Fewer stops and smaller queues reduce emissions and elevated concentrations around intersections</td>
<td>Cannot estimate from our data</td>
<td>Concentrations depend on emissions, micro-scale turbulence, dispersion, transport from nearby streets, and other factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive uses near highways</td>
<td>Further is better, but under normal daytime conditions 500 feet is sufficient. If there are consistent nocturnal surface inversions, much longer distances are recommended.</td>
<td>Up to a factor of four or more</td>
<td>Much more important during surface inversions, which usually occur during night and can persist through mid-morning.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Airports</td>
<td>Site residential and other sensitive uses far from airports.</td>
<td>Up to a factor of four or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The People Who Really Did the Work:

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