

Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

Los Angeles—What Future for the “City of the Future”?



In This Issue

- **Transit oriented development**
- **LA, the homeless capital of the nation**
- **Fighting university expansion . . . again**
- **Surveillance of your every move**

The Seventh Generation

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

—From The Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

How Imperial Decline Contributes to Urban Decay in Los Angeles

By Dick Platkin

"If you cannot predict,
how can you plan?
The answer is clear;
you cannot;
you proceed blindly."
—Gabriel Kolko,
CounterPunch, May 14, 2012

GABRIEL KOLKO'S ARTICLE is about the United States government's endless, futile, bankrupting imperial wars. He argues that there is no end in sight, and that the federal government will continue to mindlessly wage these wars. Sadly, the domestic consequences of these wars, and the public sector's parallel inability to predict and plan at the metropolitan or neighborhood level, have also become a curse on American cities.

The bipartisan, neoconservative foreign policy Kolko dissects neatly dovetails with the neoliberal approach to urban governance painfully visible in most large American cities such as Los Angeles. In both cases the quirks of market forces, whether global or local, subvert the planning process because of the economic system's uncontrollable fluctuations and periodic breakdowns into crises and conflicts.



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Photos by the author

Case Study of Los Angeles

A close look at Los Angeles, the second most populous metropolis in the United States, reveals how this downward spiral is unfolding. While the city's increased emphasis on policing and surveillance parallels the globalized militarism of the United States, so too do City Hall's business subsidies, which encourage new real estate bubbles and justify local austerity programs to subsidize pet projects and the police build-up. For example, in the past month alone, the local press has reported a \$67 million dollar tax break for a new downtown hotel, unprecedented education cutbacks and a large surge in police murders.

On the twentieth anniversary of the 1992 urban insurrection that resulted in 1,000 torched buildings, fifty people murdered, over 10,000 people wounded and another 10,000 people arrested, Los Angeles is a sad sack of a city. Despite City Hall and media boosterism, decay and decline are in the air. While the city's politicians, nearly all centrist Democrats like Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, still portray Los Angeles as a boomtown, the city is tired and rapidly aging. In reality, it perfectly reflects the broad plight of the United States described by Kolko. Imperial overreach is far from over and has already resulted in substantial domestic stagnation, with long-term prospects even worse.

Furthermore, the revival strategies of the Los Angeles business elites and their political sidekicks are comedic. Except, of course, for policing and spying, they have incrementally cut public payrolls, employee compensation, services and infrastructure to the bone.

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ON THE COVER

View of Downtown Los Angeles from the Hollywood Hills

Photo by Dick Platkin

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Here's Why We're Not Finding Real Solutions to Homelessness in LA

By Steve Clare

NOTWITHSTANDING the sad reality that almost one in five Los Angeles residents live in poverty, and that LA is now the homeless capital of the nation, with more than 51,000 homeless people (by official count) living in LA County, the problem is far from unsolvable. Cities across the nation—New York, Denver and Austin, just to name a few—have made great strides. What Los Angeles lacks compared to these cities is the political will to grapple with the problem in a meaningful way. Instead, the City has relied on a poor substitute for effective social policy—law enforcement.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has been directed to roust homeless people from their hiding places, oversee the seizure and disposal of their personal property, push homeless encampments from one neighborhood to another and ticket and tow the vehicles of people whose only buffer from the concrete sidewalk is the wheels of their cars.

Striving to stay ahead of the LAPD's latest geographical focus, the homeless migrate, first concentrated in Skid Row, then pushed to other neighborhoods in response to the City's law enforcement directives, then back to Skid Row when residents of those neighborhoods beleaguered by the problems associated with homelessness—real and perceived—demand and get

similar levels of law enforcement. While perhaps providing momentary relief to homeowners and temporary reprieve for political leaders, police enforcement does nothing to solve the problem of homelessness.

Housing, affordable to those without means, is the fundamental solution to reducing homelessness, and it could save the City money. A recent evaluation of LA County's Project 50, which provided permanent housing with needed services to fifty of the most vulnerable long-term homeless people on Skid Row, found that by saving on the cost of emergency room service, shelters and jail, the program yielded a net savings to the municipality of nearly \$240,000 over a two-year period. Unfortunately, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has never made housing a priority for his administration, and the city council has also failed to provide the necessary leadership.

Conceding that budgets are strained and that LA is therefore unlikely to muster the resources needed to solve this housing crisis any time soon, the City should be looking for other concrete actions that would immediately improve the situation. There are actions that would address the root of the problem—the shortage of affordable housing. Some of these actions would cost the City little and all of them would offer substantial benefit, including:

- Resume the City's existing subsidy program that funds the acquisition and refurbishment of small apartment buildings. Such a program could stanch LA's loss of hundreds of units of affordable housing every year and, at \$25,000 to \$50,000 per unit, this subsidy is modest compared to the cost of homelessness.



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This is a slightly revised version of a blog posted on City Watch (citywatchla.com) on May 3, 2012.

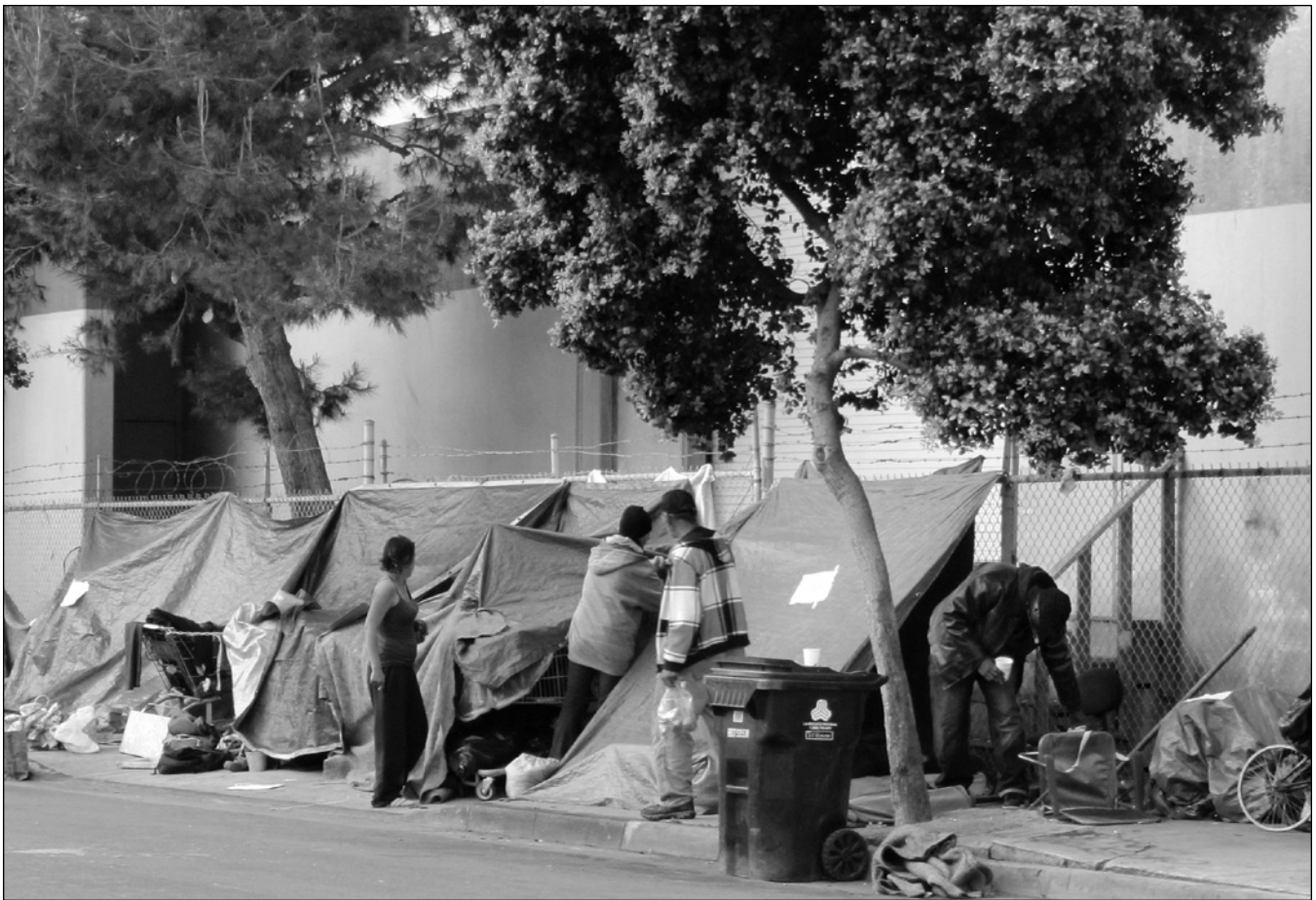


Photo: Marie Kennedy

Homeless in Venice cleaning up and preparing to defend their possessions from an impending police sweep

- Make underutilized, city-owned “surplus” properties available to non-profit organizations to create more affordable housing. For example, why not lease the air rights above city-owned parking lots to non-profits to build shelters and affordable apartments? Eliminating the cost of buying land makes housing a whole lot cheaper to build.
- Systematize a distinction between the two types of illegal/bootleg rental units. There are reportedly between 40,000 and 60,000 bootleg units in the city, units that do not comply with building and safety or zoning codes. Currently, the City’s well intentioned but misdirected code enforcement program makes no distinction between unsafe units and those that are simply lacking proper permits. Those that are uninhabitable should be shut down, but safe, habitable units should be approved on the condition that they be rented to low-income people. In a city with an acknowledged housing crisis, we should not be systematically eliminating hundreds of units.

Finally, one must recognize that all these measures will take time to implement and that thousands of

people will continue to go without shelter for some time. Currently, there are only about 12,000 shelter beds in the county. Therefore, the City should expand and extend the winter shelter program year-round and immediately provide safe and legal places, close to sanitary facilities, for homeless people to park the vehicles they sleep in overnight.

If Los Angeles were to get bold enough to reset its moral compass, one could imagine tiny portions of grass set aside in each district amounting to just a fraction of the 40,000 acres of City-owned parkland. These would serve as places to rest—unharassed—until enough permanent housing is developed to provide what we all know is needed: homes for the homeless and supportive services for those in need.

Of course, it will take strong leadership to stand up to the NIMBY attitudes that have led to policies that effectively bulldoze homeless people from community to community like mounds of trash in a landfill. After all, the City’s responsibility extends to all of its residents and that includes our unhoused neighbors. **P²**

People's Planning in the City of Angels

By Lauren Ahkiam

The Real Work of People's Planning

My chosen city is often slandered as “fake,” but I’ve stayed over the past decade because of the very real and inspiring movements for justice and equity. The Los Angeles I know and love boasts dedicated activists working for healthy, safe and comfortable neighborhoods; access to resources and opportunities; and a voice in the decision-making process. By and large, low-income communities of color know what they want for the future of their neighborhoods and are willing to work hard to improve things. They also wrestle with low incomes, little infrastructure, limited English proficiency and low levels of higher education. Residents want to effect change in their communities, but they get frustrated trying to navigate LA’s complex bureaucracy, have long been neglected from civic processes and are rightly skeptical about what is possible—given how much is promised yet little delivered.

Progressive planners can use their training and experience to facilitate community members’ engagement in the overwhelming world of planning and politics. Los Angeles is home to an impressive diversity of popular education and participatory planning examples: amazing professors; working-class cyclist cooperatives like Ciudad de Luces; community-driven anti-displacement planning campaigns such as Southeast Asian Community Alliance in Chinatown and the United Neighbors In Defense Against Displacement (UNIDAD) coalition in the Figueroa Corridor; and robust participatory planning with underrepresented

residents, like ACCION Westlake, East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC) and Pacoima Beautiful (PB). We have the LA County Department of Public Health which, through its PLACE and RENEW programs, has provided funding and support to numerous popular education efforts. I have had the opportunity to join two such efforts by way of People’s Planning Schools, first as a participant with UNIDAD, and later as co-facilitator at PB.

People’s Planning School is one name for a workshop series that trains residents in key issues and conducts community design or visioning processes, similar to teach-ins and the Freedom Schools of the 1960s. At PB, we were inspired by UNIDAD’s People’s Planning Schools, with curriculum created by David Robinson of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), TRUST South LA’s Sandra McNeill and Blanca Rivera, Pri da Silva of Healthy Eating Active Communities, Monic Uriarte of Esperanza Community Housing Corporation and technical assistance from the PLACE Program. Harlem’s WE ACT for Environmental Justice has also led extensive participatory planning projects, and their Cecil Corbin-Mark spoke at the launch of UNIDAD’s series. He described People’s Planning Schools as marrying urban planners’ knowledge and theoretical tools with residents’ practical experience in a way that uses proactive community visioning as a tool to build power, thereby transforming the development process and holding government accountable.

Pacoima Beautiful’s People’s Planning School

At PB, our invaluable community organizer Bonnie Johnson spearheaded the process, starting with a sense of what our residents cared about, while identifying the areas where they may need more knowledge or



Lauren Ahkiam has been working as part of anti-displacement and environmental justice efforts for over ten years and has a master’s degree in urban planning from UCLA.

Photos by the author

skill-building. We chose a time that worked with our resident's work schedules, and the local library as a recognizable location. Given that we wanted to build relationships between the Latino and African-American communities of Pacoima, we opted for side-by-side translation rather than headset translation or monolingual sessions. We felt this was important to prevent one group feeling left out consistently, and to encourage dialogue between residents of different language backgrounds. I have also seen it done successfully where presenters switch between English and Spanish, meaning everyone who's not bilingual uses headsets at some part of the meeting. Both approaches do have logistical ramifications to consider, such as the time spent translating or setting up headsets, but both are worth it. Our organizing team conducted extensive outreach to local community groups, from churches to parent centers to the NAACP branch, introducing our organization and inviting residents to workshops.

We started with a clear notion of what we wanted to cover, but quickly realized the importance of flexibility, adjusting to residents' desire for intense discussions. We planned sessions to allow for new students to join; I have also seen it structured where students commit to all sessions up front. If having drop-in style sessions, I recommend finding creative ways to drive home key concepts, such as leaders getting new students caught up. We had three units with four sessions each: City Politics and Us: The Big Picture; Complete Streets and Design in Our Community: The Local Picture; and Our Community, Our Family, Our Streets!, which addressed topics like water and health. In future, I would try fewer but longer sessions to allow for more robust discussion and less time lost getting started and wrapping up. Our series concluded with a graduation to which our allies, supporters and residents' families were invited and at which we distributed certificates to all and prizes (such as bike lights and water bottles) to repeat attendees. Graduates became members and joined our campaign work, putting their new knowledge into practice.

Engaging and Organizing

To have a participatory planning process, you need people at your meetings. Planners and officials often



Residents at an UNIDAD People's Planning School with headset translation for monolingual English speakers.

wonder about low turnout, particularly if they have taken the care to provide translation, food, childcare and appealing flyers. We may need more to woo busy families to take on an extra obligation, for example, by being explicit about the stakes and what we're asking of residents, and offering something valuable in return, like useful information and bonding with neighbors. East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, as part of their Green Zones campaign to prevent new sources of toxic pollution, brilliantly incorporate discussion with events like dinner parties and Zumba classes.

Organizers, whether professional staff or community leaders, make the difference as far as residents not just attending meetings but engaging; organizers inform planning curriculum, incorporate "graduates" into campaigns and build relationships with residents. Ask yourself: are you more likely to go to an event a friend is bugging you to attend, or because of a flyer you found at the library? Speaking of turnout, often cities or large organizations turn to small organizations for turnout to an event, which is a huge ask of resource-strapped nonprofits. In this instance, the larger entity should ensure a project supplements something the smaller organization is working on, and identify ways to contribute, such as a letter of support or coordinating a meeting between residents and decision-makers. Or even better, contract community organizations as outreach consultants.

Diverse Teaching Methods

As modeled by the Freedom Schools, People's Planning School curriculums aim to be of immediate application and rely on discussion and activities, not memorization or lecture. UNIDAD shared with us a popular role-playing activity where residents pursue a cause, such as slowing traffic, with volunteers acting as decision-makers who represent the police, city council members and the Department of Transportation. "Decision-makers" act out responses. In the case of the police department: "I can't slow traffic but I can give you statistics about how dangerous the street is to make the case to officials." Students share their findings and end with a deeper understanding of the different jurisdictions and players. UNIDAD also created a "virtual walking tour" as part of their Visions for Vermont project—a photo panorama that allowed residents to note what they'd like to change or keep

about the neighborhood. Residents' remarks and red, yellow and green sticker "votes" were analyzed by staff and presented to stakeholders. Gilda Haas and designer Rosten Woo led our residents in "Blocks and Lots," a game that explains zoning and its importance. A wise leader from another community can lend perspective and solidarity to residents in the midst of a difficult campaign. We found public speaking trainings and practice, practice and more practice were vital for leadership development.

When seeking input, it's easy to default to broad questions like "What is your vision for the community?" or overly specific questions like "What zoning designation do you think is best for this street?" If you can distill what you are actually trying to find out—for example, would people support mixed-use zoning and density increases and under what conditions, or would people give priority to bikes on a certain

street and if so which street—explain first and then ask your question. It's also helpful to use multiple methods to get at one question, as everyone learns and communicates differently. For example, to determine what the community would prioritize for streetscape improvements, we collected data in three ways: 1) surveys to see if and why people enjoy or avoid major streets; 2) bike and pedestrian counts; and 3) walks down different streets with residents, taking notes and photographs along the way. Based on these findings, our residents created a survey to ask their neighbors what they would want to see change on the main corridor. Latino urbanist James Rojas conducted a "Build Your City" activity with our residents, spreading his bag of toys and loose ends onto the table and leading our residents in a creative process to reimagine the community of Pacoima and our public spaces. As a result, we had a clear sense of the ways in which our residents



LEFT Figueroa Corridor residents make notes of what they would like to see more of, change or get rid of in their neighborhood using a "virtual walking tour" panorama.



RIGHT Pacoima Beautiful staff and residents play Gilda Haas and Rosten Woo's "Blocks and Lots" zoning game.



Utility hub mural created by Pacoima Beautiful's Youth United Towards Economic Protection group, led by Osbaldo Robles (front left) and Brenda Medina (in sunglasses).

would want to improve the streetscape conditions in our community and advocate for those improvements.

Keeping It Going

Planning processes are often long, and there is sometimes little to report for stretches of time due to limited resources, politics and overburdened staff. Identifying ways to keep people engaged and to demonstrate small changes can sustain residents' interest and trust during a long-term campaign and can help diversify a People's Planning School curriculum. When doing popular education or advocacy, identify ways for people to engage in the effort beyond writing a letter or clicking "like." Community-led actions full of colorful signage can take place just before or after opaque city meetings to give residents an opportunity to speak out beyond a two-minute public testimony slot. Given the unpredictable nature of political campaigns, many community organizations also conduct actions on their own timelines, such as SAJE's Displacement Free Zone marches or PB's traffic safety awareness event.

Grassroots-led concrete improvement projects that create visible changes are also invaluable in sustaining engagement in a lengthy campaign, helping prevent

member (and staff) burnout. In Pacoima, we frequently conduct tree plantings, tree care and community cleanup events in our community—improving public spaces and lifting spirits during sometimes tedious work to address underlying environmental concerns. Inspired by the volunteer-made tile mural at SAJE's office, we collaborated with local stakeholders for small-scale street improvements. We worked with a parents' center to plant trees outside of an elementary school, which the parents pledged to maintain. We worked with youth to create murals on utility hubs (the grey boxes at intersections) and the benches of a family center. These projects doubled as teaching opportunities as we navigated sign mural ordinances that had put a freeze on permitted public art, multiple entities that had jurisdiction over utility hubs, urban forestry division guidelines and permitting processes and maintenance agreement requirements. Smaller scale asks can also give residents experience with civic engagement, such as calling the city to request a bulky trash pickup or speaking with a council member. Planning and conducting outreach for small events give residents opportunities to build confidence and leadership skills.

In Boyle Heights, Green LA's Holly Harper worked with community organizations ELACC and Union de Vecinos and landscape architect Steve Rasmussen Cancian to improve streetscape conditions. They designed and will build *salas publicas*, or public living rooms, using bright pink paper to block out furniture locations on the street. Though crosswalks may take years to get approvals and funding, residents will build street furniture, create public art, build skills and raise their voices in the meantime.

Frustrations with typical public meetings—inaccessible language, lengthy daytime schedule, power imbalances and budget cuts—can weary the most stalwart advocate. People's Planning Schools and related actions play an important role in building local leaders to continue the struggle while sustaining the spirits of all involved. The resulting community visions, people's plans and skilled graduates fuel campaigns forward, and for relatively little cost beyond staff time. Most importantly, in a society that too frequently dismisses low-income communities of color, participatory planning elevates residents to their proper place—as decision-makers for their communities.

P²

The Los Angeles 1992 Civil Disturbance

A Race Riot or an Urban Rebellion?

By Dick Platkin

THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY of the 1992 Los Angeles civil disturbance recently passed, and the corporate media again routinely portrayed this historic event as a race riot resulting from the acquittal of four policemen who beat up an African-American motorist. The media then systematically commented that the state of ethnic and police-community relations in Los Angeles is much improved today. Case closed.

But was this event a race riot? As I argue at the end of this article, it clearly was not a race riot. On careful examination, it was an urban rebellion that required a coordinated police and military response to be suppressed.

This conclusion does not only depend on the facts. It also depends on which theory of racism you subscribe to. While the facts are not easy to obtain, we do know the following.

The civil disturbance lasted for three days in 1992, from Thursday, April 29 to Saturday, May 1, although curfews and martial law were maintained for five days. The next stage consisted of short-term intervention by public agencies to aid residents and businesses whose structures were damaged or destroyed during the event, but there were no investigations into or prosecutions associated with the fifty-five people murdered during the three-day period. The media suggested they were victims of random bullets or were shot by other rioters while looting. Since there is no evidence for these suspicions, most of the fifty-

five people were probably shot by either the police or merchants protecting their buildings and stores.

Based on the number of people arrested (between 10,000 and 13,000, of whom 52 percent were Latino, 10 percent white and 38 percent black), wounded (4,000), deported (several hundred), killed (55), buildings looted or torched (4,000), jobs lost (40,000) and property damaged (\$1 billion in 1992 dollars), this was the largest and most destructive civil disturbance in the United States since New York City's anti-draft riots in 1863! While the two events are similar in their length and destructiveness, there is a major difference. The 1863 event in New York City has been widely studied by historians, while the 1992 Los Angeles event has been ignored.

It is the perfect example of a structured absence, an epochal historical event that has been methodically overlooked by the media, academia and public officials.

Based on my reconstruction, the civil disturbance had three stages.

Stage 1 began in the late afternoon of Thursday, April 29, after the Simi Valley acquittals. It was quick and largely spontaneous, beginning with several televised incidences of inter-racial violence in a largely African-American neighborhood, but political aspects quickly emerged. These featured an early evening, militant political rally in downtown Los Angeles protesting the trial, police violence and the neglect of inner-city neighborhoods. A short time later, other demonstrations took place at many symbols of power. The doors of City Hall and the LAPD's headquarters were bashed in. The *LA Times* had its ground-floor windows broken.



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There were also more spontaneous events that employed political graffiti to protest the trial in different parts of the city, mostly minority neighborhoods in South Los Angeles. Overtly political targets, including a military recruitment center and a City of Los Angeles multi-agency office that included the field office of an African-American council member, were, however, also targeted and torched. One of the most interesting political targets was a commercial center funded through anti-poverty programs. The African-American poverty-pimp who ran the facility was chased through the facility by local residents!

These events, though anecdotal, belie the media image of a race riot.

By Thursday evening, on the streets of South Los Angeles, where the rebellion began, a party atmosphere developed without any evidence of racial or ethnic consciousness or friction. People were just people, partying on the streets, often sharing “free” consumer items grabbed from the stores. Meanwhile, beginning that day, the same graffiti appeared throughout Los Angeles: “No Justice, No Peace.”

By the end of Thursday afternoon, more general looting and arson began. It targeted particularly disliked stores and swap meets. Most ominously, an enormous cloud of dark smoke enveloped the city. In non-riot areas pandemonium resulted, with nearly all employees leaving work early to join their families at home and pick up children from schools that were closing early because teachers and staff refused to stay on the premises.

As for the notoriously brutal Los Angeles Police Department, it was stunned by events, withdrawing from the epicenter only to watch the events unfold. Likewise, the Los Angeles Fire Department was overwhelmed and unable to save many buildings.

As a result, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley declared martial law and imposed a curfew on the entire city. He also requested intervention from the State of California and federal government. Both responded on Friday by sending in the National Guard from Northern California, as well as the California Highway Patrol, federal marshals and police and sheriff brigades from many other jurisdictions.

Stage 2 was the second day, when 4,000 federalized National Guard troops arrived to augment the Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff. Nevertheless, this is when most of the arson and looting took place. Near my house, in Los Angeles’s Miracle Mile area, I watched people ram a station wagon through an appliance store plate glass window and then fill it up with TVs. I also remember hearing radio news reports about looting at an inner-city drug store. The reporter described a completely multi-racial crowd consisting of Asians, Latinos, Blacks and Anglos, all grabbing consumer goods off the shelves. It was during this second day that the civil disturbance spread over the entire Los Angeles metropolitan area, and also leapfrogged to San Francisco, Las Vegas, Atlanta, Tampa, Seattle, Toronto, Washington, D.C., and even several European cities.



Stage 3 appeared after the political protests and high-intensity discount shopping subsided. At this point, organized crime joined the fray, targeting specific stores. For instance, near my house men armed with automatic weapons held neighbors at bay while they shot the locks off of the doors at a large retail camera store, then went into the store and selectively grabbed the most expensive camera equipment. By this time the entire city was under martial law and federal troops and police forces patrolled the city for several days, including areas that had little or no demonstrations, looting or fires. The press reported that their rifles were loaded, with the safeties turned off.

Saturday, by the way, was also May Day. Despite the enormous police and military presence, there was a May Day rally in the downtown, along with many other smaller demonstrations focused on police and poverty issues. These events were highly political and were met with an enormous inter-agency police response, but no one was attacked or arrested for demonstrating.



How Do We Interpret this Data?

Clearly, most of the press coverage continues to portray these events as a race riot. The total militarization of the civil disturbance was presented as the efforts of elected officials to protect the public, not commercial property or institutions, even though much of the subsequent federal aid efforts focused on aiding stores that had been looted or burnt down.

Nevertheless, a look at immediate press coverage, such as the issue of *Newsweek* published on the Monday following the civil disturbance, depicts a conflict between have-nots and haves. It was only later that the government and media spin machines repackaged this civil disturbance, with its major multi-racial class component, as a race riot, not an urban rebellion suppressed by an integrated military and police response.

My analysis of the data confirms that the 1992 civil disturbance was primarily an urban rebellion with strong political and economic components, not a race riot. The

misperception that it was a race riot largely results from the several televised racial attacks at the very beginning of the events. These isolated and wholly atypical events were continuously repeated on television, locally, nationally and internationally, resulting in the erroneous conclusion that the event was a race riot. In addition, in some neighborhoods, Korean-American merchants operated many of the torched or looted stores.

By focusing on the ethnicity of the merchants, rather than their economic role, many television viewers were misled to believe that the attacks were based on the race of the merchants.

Which Theory of Racism?

The classic theory of race relations developed by W.E.B. Du Bois and Oliver Cox, which dominated social science until the 1940s and has stubbornly held on since then as a minority view, considers racism to be institutional. It originated with slavery and colonialism and consists of laws maintaining apartheid and segregation, social arrangements like ethnic separatism, supporting ideologies and social-psychological attitudes (prejudice) and resulting individual practices, usually called bias and bigotry. The role of these social mechanisms is to sustain economic exploitation in which some ethnic or racial groups are super-exploited and social separation and stigmatization maintains this economic process. Because it results in substantial inter-group and intra-group inequalities, and because these inequalities often produce acts of individual and collective resistance, segregation and stigmatization allow this resistance to be quarantined.

In this view, racism has since evolved to sustain more modern forms of economic exploitation and political rule. When chattel slavery was replaced by capitalism's wage slavery, the basic institutional mechanisms continued, but in updated forms.

In this theory, prejudiced attitudes and behavior, including mobs and riots, result from racism, but are not its cause. This theory, which I personally think is still the most sound, would interpret LA's 1992 civil disturbance as primarily a multiracial urban rebel-

lion directed against business and government institutions that participants held responsible for economic exploitation and political repression, not a race riot, despite scattered incidences of interracial violence.

In terms of historical precedents, this interpretation would point to the dozens of violent ghetto rebellions in the United States between 1964 and 1968. Earlier race riots, such as those in the World War I era, (e.g., St. Louis and Detroit) were entirely different, much more like pogroms in which white mobs attacked African-American neighborhoods.

The competing *contact* theory of racism presents the 1992 Los Angeles civil disturbance as a race riot in which the Simi Valley trial acquittal of white police officers elicited anti-white violence by African Americans. This theory is based on ideas of ethnocentrism and xenophobia refined in the 1940s with great support from the Carnegie and Ford Foundations through their funding of scholars like Gunnar Myrdal, who wrote *An American Dilemma* with such foundation support. The contact theory has been the dominant theory in the field of race and ethnic relations ever since. It argues that racial and ethnic categories are obvious and self-evident to people. Individuals automatically know what ethnic or racial group they are in and what groups other people are in, and they largely and “naturally” see the world divided into these various national and sub-national groups.

In this approach, humans are essentially hardwired to see their own group positively (ethnocentrism) and other groups negatively (xenophobia). When different groups have contact, these natural processes kick in. At the more benign end of the contact spectrum, prejudice appears. At the extreme end, contact results in strife and pogroms, sometimes even in genocide. In this theory, contact produces “organic” prejudice resulting from people reacting negatively to obviously perceptible group differences. These prejudiced attitudes, in turn, result in prejudiced behavior, which aggregates into racist practices and patterns.

In terms of Los Angeles, there are some facts that support the contact theory, such as televised beatings of white, Latino and Asian motorists. Others point

to the burning of Korean-owned stores in many neighborhoods.

My response to the first set of facts is that this was a result of prejudice, but that these were well publicized but highly unrepresentative events. As for the arson and looting, the same trends occurred in the 1965 Watts Rebellion, but then the target was another middle-man minority, Jews. In both cases, scattered merchants got burnt out, with little evidence that their ethnicity, *rather than their economic niche*, was the cause of arson. Furthermore, in the case of 1992, many of the merchants who got burnt out operated in Latino neighborhoods, like Koreatown, which had nothing to do with black grievances against the police. In fact, 1992 statistics indicate that more Latinos were arrested than blacks.



Furthermore, a look at immediate press coverage, such as that issue of *Newsweek*, reveals that the civil disturbance was clearly presented as a conflict between have-nots and haves. It was only later that the spin machine repackaged this historic event as a race riot rather than an urban rebellion.

I conclude the overwhelming data confirms that the 1992 civil disturbance was primarily an urban rebellion, not a race riot. Furthermore, the role of the police, reinforced by the corporate media, was to stop the rebellion and squelch its political dimension, not separate warring racial or ethnic groups.

P²

South “Central” Los Angeles

Residents Fight to Save Their Beloved Community in the Face of USC Expansion Plans

By Paulina Gonzalez

SOON AFTER THE CIVIL UNREST that shook Los Angeles twenty years ago, promises to “Rebuild LA” through investment, development and economic opportunities for South Central Los Angeles echoed throughout the city. Twenty years later, although South Central has been re-branded (not so creatively) as “South Los Angeles,” many of the problems that plagued us twenty years ago remain today. For instance, unemployment has stayed at a staggeringly high 24 percent in some areas. Furthermore, investment and development in the northern portion of what was once known as South Central has led to gentrification with mass displacement of low-income residents. The area between the 10 Freeway on the north and Martin Luther King Blvd. on the south is held up by the city officials as a prized product of redevelopment. At its center lies the ever expanding University of Southern California (USC), the primary culprit behind the increasing economic pressure and displacement that is occurring in the surrounding Latino and African-American neighborhoods. Despite USC’s already sprawling footprint, including dozens of parcels the university purchased surrounding the main campus, it has now announced plans to double the size of its campus. With our community’s future hanging in the balance, a David and Goliath battle is brewing as low-income

residents prepare to stand toe-to-toe against a nationally recognized university and its billionaire trustees.

For the last twenty years, the predominantly Latino and African-American working-class families that live in the neighborhoods surrounding USC have been paying the high cost of the promise to rebuild South Los Angeles. At the same time that USC has transformed itself from a commuter college to a college in which 90 percent of its students live within one mile of the campus, other development forces push steadily southward. The LA Live/Staples Center and the newly opened Exposition Line, as well as brand new luxury housing developments along Figueroa Blvd., have added to the increasing economic pressure on the area’s longtime residents. Low-income residents, many of whom pay more than 30 percent of their income, *and some more than 50 percent*, on rent, are especially vulnerable to displacement as the northern part of South Los Angeles continues to attract market-driven and publicly subsidized investment.

At a March 14th Los Angeles City Planning Department hearing this spring, with hundreds of community residents packed into the USC-owned Radisson Hotel on Figueroa Blvd. to discuss USC’s expansion and development plans, Father Bill Delaney of St. Agnes Church testified about the university’s role in the loss of 1,000 families from his parish in the last ten years. Orinio Opinaldo, a St. Agnes parishioner who has lived in the neighborhood for 62 years, echoed these concerns about mass displacement: “The entire community has changed and continues to change. People are being forced to leave and so are our resources. I used to be able to walk to the library at Hoover and Jefferson, but it was torn down during the first USC expansion.



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Photos by Beverley Keefe

I loved that library. Now that's gone, and my neighbors and fellow parishioners are disappearing too."

A Health Impact Assessment of the USC expansion plan, conducted by Human Impact Partners along with SAJE (Strategic Actions for a Just Economy) and Esperanza Community Housing Corporation used data from the 2010 Census to provide evidence on the loss of families from the area. The 90007 zip code, which surrounds the USC campus and is bordered on the north by the 10 Freeway, experienced a decrease in population including family households, while surrounding zip codes saw an increase in this population. This 90007 zip code saw nearly three times the decrease in the population under 5 years of age and between 10 and 14 years of age, and two times the decrease in children ages 5 to 9 compared to the City of Los Angeles and surrounding areas. At the same time, this zip code experienced a much higher increase in the college age population between 20 and 24. The 90007 zip code also experienced a more significant decrease in the African-American population than surrounding areas. Most revealing, 90007 saw a decrease in the Latino population, while the rest of the city, including the zip codes surrounding 90007, saw an increase in the Latino population.

What the Census data shows is a population moving southward. Families with children are moving from the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the university to south of Martin Luther King Blvd. In other words, the promised economic opportunity that has taken place in the northern part of South Los Angeles hasn't relieved poverty—it has merely displaced it south of Martin Luther King Blvd.

In 2007, as gentrifying forces gathered steam, just a few blocks from where USC students were paying tens of thousands of dollars a year to study urban planning, dozens of South Los Angeles community members gathered at a People's Planning School. This school, employing the principles of popular education, was organized by SAJE, Trust South LA (formerly known as the Figueroa Corridor Community Land Trust) and Esperanza Community Housing Corporation. Their goal? To arm themselves with the tools necessary to become involved in the City's planning process and save their neighborhoods. Community



Community action at the Planning Department hearing on the USC's development plan.

members, many of them with limited education and limited English-speaking skills, were learning about USC's proposed Master Plan, the City's Community Plan updates, zoning, entitlements, affordable housing, the California Environmental Quality Act, the relation between urban planning and health and more.

Following the People's Planning School, residents conducted crucial participatory research in the form of two community walks. Doing work the City and the university should have done, residents knocked on hundreds of doors in order to explore and document the loss of family housing in their neighborhoods. What they found was astonishing. In a ten-year period, 76 percent of the housing that was previously occupied by families had now been converted to student housing.

Not too long after the community walks, council members and planning officials took part in a public forum in which they listened to the residents' concerns regarding illegal evictions, the lack of healthy affordable housing, housing discrimination and the displacement of their neighbors. Just as in the aftermath of the Rodney King uprisings, promises by elected officials and planning officials to protect the community were made.

Now, as USC seeks approval for its expansion plan, the moment of truth has arrived. On May 10 2012, despite objections by hundreds of community residents, and with few mitigation measures in place, the USC Specific Plan was recommended for approval by the Los Angeles City Planning Commission. This summer, the Specific Plan will be moving to City Council for a vote.

The public input and City approval process thus far have been marked, on both the university's and the City's part, by disingenuousness, cynicism and spin. To

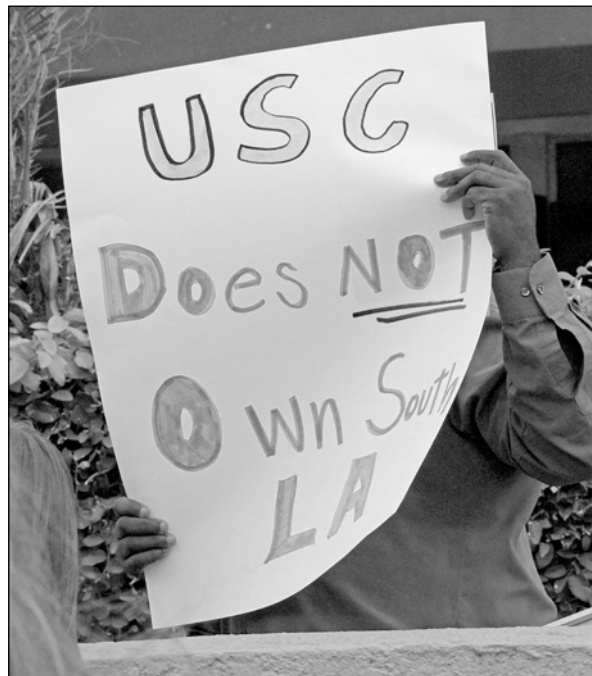
give just one example, a central argument in favor of the USC Specific Plan, offered by both USC and the City's planners, is that USC's construction of new student housing will "free up" 900 units of local housing for the non-USC community. In reality, even if students do eventually move out of enough local housing to vacate 900 units (a highly debatable prediction), those units will merely be made available at market-rate rents, rents that have skyrocketed over the past dozen years out of the reach of most of the local low-income families.

Similar cynicism characterizes the university's approach to local small businesses under its expansion plan. One of many cruel ironies is that, as a major part of its ex-

pansion, USC proposes to demolish a community-serving grocery store and numerous small businesses on a plot of land initially acquired and assembled through eminent domain to serve small businesses displaced by USC's expansion in the 1960s. The university plans to build a high-end hotel, student housing, retail and restaurants. Along with the loss of community-serving businesses, the development is expected to increase gentrification and displace thousands of additional local low-income families.

But what the university didn't expect as it crafted its plan was that the doz-

ens of community residents who attended the first People's Planning School, and the dozens more who have participated in subsequent ones, would organize themselves and hundreds of their neighbors. These residents, the "David" in the brewing battle against "Goliath," or USC, are determined to prevent the further disappearance of their beloved community. They are determined to be heard. Although they welcome investment, they know it must be done responsibly if they are to stay in the community in which the investment will be located—as we say at SAJE, "Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors!"





SAJE's People's Planning School

Their goal is *not* to stop the expansion of the university; their hope is that the university will hear their concerns and act responsibly. They see the possibility of increased income for community members at living-wage jobs through the implementation of a local hiring program like the one being implemented by Anschutz Entertainment Group at the LA Live/Staples Center. They see an opportunity for the university to make the community whole again after years of displacement by leveraging its resources to build or preserve affordable housing in the area. They hope for small business assistance for enterprises currently located at University Village and in the surrounding neighborhood that will have to compete against the shiny new chain stores in the newly developed University Village. They hope that the community's grocery store will be allowed to remain. They know that without such mitigation measures they and their neighbors may be gone tomorrow, but that if the university approaches this development with their most vulnerable neighbors in mind, this development could serve as a model of responsible

investment, and of true town and gown partnership.

If their requests are not heard by the university, these residents hold onto the hope, against all odds, that they will be heard by City Hall. But there the residents remain a “David” amongst high-powered, university-paid lobbyists who roam its halls. As hundreds of residents filled the council chambers last month for the Planning Commission vote, they knew that the university and its billionaire trustees, like developers Rick Caruso and Ed Roski, count the mayor and some council members as close personal friends.

Twenty years after broken promises to “Rebuild LA”, South “Central” Los Angeles residents are not sure that they will be able to count on friends in high places, but they know they can count on each other. Margarita Madero, who has lived in the neighborhood just north of the university for over twenty years, says it perfectly, “If we don’t fight for our family, friends and neighbors, who will?”

P²

Transit-Oriented Classism in Los Angeles

A Look at the Ghetto Blue

By Lisa Schweitzer

With its electric wires crisscrossing the horizon looking like stitches across a deep cut, the Ghetto Blue is a microcosm of the city—a huge scar running through LA that needs to be healed.

—Ben Quiñones,

“Killing Time on the Ghetto Blue,”
LA Weekly, January 22, 2004

THE BLUE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (LRT) Line was built twenty years ago on existing right-of-way over 35 kilometers (21 miles) between downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach. With nineteen stations, it serves what was once a heavily used transit corridor through South Central Los Angeles. The Blue Line thus covers a lot of Los Angeles real estate. It was the region’s first foray in the hyperbole that accompanies all large project development: Blue Line promoters and rail advocates made big promises for the investment to the riot-ravaged communities in Central Los Angeles. It was said that the LRT would bring development and jobs for the area. In 1996, nearly a decade after it was built, UCLA’s Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and USC’s Tridib Banerjee published their eloquent commentary,



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Photos by the author

There's No There There, documenting how, despite the promises made about jobs and development to the disadvantaged residents along the Blue Line, Blue Line stations had not sparked much development at all, let alone fulfilled the inflated promises. The land around the stations remained stubbornly underdeveloped—and most remains so even today, a decade later.

It's important that we look at the decade of the 1990s critically. In 1996, the data year for Sideris and Banerjee's commentary, the region began heading towards what has now become famous as the U.S.'s real estate "bubble." It is difficult to convey just how steep changes in home prices were, but in 1996, the median home price in Los Angeles was \$190,000. By 2007, it was \$550,000. And yet, despite all this price growth throughout that decade—the nearly frantic home building, the ridiculously priced condos getting planted on top of the region's Westside transit darling, the Red Line—still virtually no development happened along the Blue Line, despite its high ridership levels. In A. Paxon's 2005 pre-bust article in *Southern California Real Estate* crowing about the new, successful transit-oriented developments in Los Angeles, the Blue Line was not mentioned once. Not once.

The Blue Line remains a cautionary tale of three things: 1) land markets do not move simply because transit advocates and builders want them to; 2) classism in transit-oriented design contributes to reinforcing the notion that communities along the Blue Line are "undesirable"; and 3) planners and public institutions that freely build—and then fail to deliver on—what they promise to their community partners occurs largely because planners and the powers they serve love to build and hate to deal with community development. If the Blue

Line should teach us anything, it's that infrastructure policy is not a substitute for social policy or for the deep engagement that helps communities leverage investments like the Blue Line into more than just transit.

There's Already a There There

Compton was historically an African-American enclave, but its demographics have changed, making the city roughly half African American and half Latino. And it is a city in its own right. Surrounding the downtown, the Blue Line station area includes a shopping center with national retailers and restaurants (Figure 1A). While the shopping is primarily auto-oriented, there is sidewalk connectivity. Also within walking distance of the station are a post office, courthouse, civic center and the architecturally significant Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in the town center (Figure 1C). There is also open land near the Compton Station (Figure 1B), and quite a bit of single-family housing (Figure 1D). The Compton Station, like most Blue Line stations, is packed with people every single day.

The City of Compton engaged in a visioning process with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) as part of its Compass Blueprint Growth Vision in 2007. The Compass Blueprint program is intended to direct new regional development towards transit-accessible land to leverage new opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD)/districts. Prepared by consultants Fregonese Calthorpe Associates (FCA) and Solimar Research Group, the document is entitled *Policies for a Thriving Compton* and it is a vision based on transit-oriented, mixed-use development. Throughout the vision, the standard ideas from form-based codes are presented for three redevelopment areas along with photos and exemplars of nothing but commercial-residential mixed-use.

Figure 1. The Compton Station Area (from top)

- A. View of shopping center, Compton
- B. Open land, Compton Station
- C. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, Compton Station
- D. Single-family housing north of open land, Compton Station



Here and there, the plan mentions the importance of industrial employment to Compton, and one of the policy recommendations is to develop mixed-use manufacturing. The Artesia Station in Compton currently has a lot of manufacturing employment, but there is no photo or specification of what mixed-use manufacturing would look like, how it would function or how it would interact with other uses. Page after page, however, of commercial and residential mixed-use appear in the plan, with drawings demonstrating how the theater would be next to the florist, and detail after detail about how to handle parking, floor-area ratios and zoning recommendations—in commercial and residential mixed-use only.

Manufacturing and industrial land exists throughout the communities on the Blue Line, from Compton Station through the Del Mar Station to the south and up through the Washington Station to the north. In “The Blue Line Blues” in the *Journal of Urban Design* (2000), Sideris and Banerjee show that the prevalence of this manufacturing acts as a barrier to development for these communities. But an examination of the station areas farther north suggest that the problem may be planners, developers and the TOD model, not the land uses per se.

Mixed-Use Industrial: Vernon, Slauson, Washington

In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, William Julius Wilson (1990) describes how the loss of industrial employment has hurt metropolitan African-American communities more than other areas in metropolitan regions. What were reasonably good-paying jobs evaporated while the U.S. economy became more oriented towards services. Brownfields are among the legacies of industrial flight, which placed inner-city communities at a competitive disadvantage.

But in the mixed-use industrial and single-use industrial spaces surrounding some of the Blue Line, industry is still functioning, and some businesses are relatively new (as at the Washington Station, Figure 2B). Furthermore, many single-family houses are interspersed with manufacturing and industry, as in Figure 2C. People in Central Los Angeles *already* live

here among the manufacturers next to the Blue Line. The configuration is unattractive, but functionally the residents have made their own mixed-use residential, commercial and industrial community. The occupants of the house in Figure 2C have taken the opportunity to sell fruit (which makes you feel really good, like the bionic man, according to the sign). Women under the station at Slauson routinely sell fresh fruit with chili, tamales and other snacks. What has not materialized in formal economic and community development efforts, people have constructed in the informal economy.

The industries shown in Figure 2 are primarily nuisances rather than polluting or hazardous industries, with the possible exception of the junkyard. In almost all of these cases, in one block, industrial uses line the tracks and in the next block, single-family housing can be found. Thus, many of these areas are *already* mixed-use with industrial, and the poor appearance of the station is not due to derelict or abandoned brownfields, but to functioning industries that are unattractive and out of scale with the station and the streets—problems that urban design could and should be able to fix if urban designers were interested in transit-oriented design for industrial workers and existing residents rather than florists and theaters for imaginary hipsters.

Thus from the perspective of social inclusion, the problem may not be that these areas are unsuitable for TOD. Instead, the themes of standard TOD, like those presented to the City of Compton by SCAG’s consultants, are so geared towards commercial and residential areas that the models are unsuitable to the reality of economic life outside white-collar work and affluent consumption. Models of TOD are currently too classist to provide an inclusionary design vocabulary for places that rely on manufacturing, like the places surrounding the Blue Line. We have proven over and over in Los Angeles, and elsewhere, that it is possible to use TOD to develop multi-family housing and retail in expensive, booming submarkets. But there is no urban design vocabulary or TOD vision that includes the activities of blue-collar workers or handles production sites so that they are not a nuisance to those walking to the station like the green nuisance recycling center near the Slauson station (Figure 2E).

Figure 2. Industrial and mixed-use industrial at Blue Line Stations



A. Washington—older site



B. Washington—new site



C. Housing across from Vernon



D. Industry at Vernon station



E. Recycling Center at Slauson



F. Junkyard at Slauson

Much of the literature on sustainability presents case studies as best practices for the transformation of industrial sites to leisure and residential sites. In some instances, manufacturing (and its attendant freight) is simply ignored as part of sustainable cities. Jabereen (2006) does not even mention a role for industry or freight transport in his evaluation of four sustainable city models: neotraditional, new urbanist, EcoCity and urban containment. Of the many new urbanist and TOD writings and TOD hybrids, virtually no discussion occurs about industry or work in the sustainable city, except that people should be able to get to work without driving—not that communities should be able to accommodate industrial employers and small industrial businesses and still be entitled to good streetscapes and amenities near stations. Thus, within our existing visions for TOD, mixed-use industrial zones like those at the Washington, Vernon and Slauson Stations have only two outcomes: redevelop/gentrify like at the stations in Hollywood around the Red Line—or languish, be erased or, alternatively, be invisible. And because those choices take a long time, the streets around these stations remain locked out of more hospitable sidewalks and streets because those are contingent on development.

Conclusion

Every day, the Blue Line serves over 75,000 boardings. In terms of mobility, the “Ghetto Blue” provides regional access for people traveling out of South Los Angeles

to opportunities in the rest of the region. But it has provided few opportunities to its host communities. In 2007, SCAG, in its Compass Blueprint strategy for developing TOD throughout the region, produced a TOD visioning plan and policy guide with residents and leaders in the City of Compton—seventeen years after the Blue Line opened. Compton’s TOD policies were published in 2007, just as real estate prices in the U.S. tanked. After waiting for nearly two decades for redevelopment, the window of opportunity for implementing development around the Blue Line may have closed again, and we have no idea when or how long it will take for these opportunities to once again materialize. By failing to put inclusion on the top of the agenda for regional development at the outset of new TOD, these communities may wind up waiting another decade before station-area development occurs.

In conjunction with waiting for the development “powers that be” to recognize the opportunities that Blue Line communities offer, blue-collar manufacturing workers and their communities continue to wait for planning and urban design to produce a transit-oriented development that includes them, access to their workplaces and their comforts. But even as Compton residents and leaders vocalized the importance of industrial jobs to their communities during their visioning, their TOD vision wound up looking like every other one, repeating the now-familiar design tropes of TOD—the florist, the theater, the sidewalk-level

storefronts. It is not as though residents of South Central would not want to have all of the retail mixed-uses included in the Compton vision, but they also need to retain what they have, even if what they have does not fit within existing forms and form-based codes.

At some point—and we are at that point in Los Angeles—the TOD model and urban design needs to innovate for blue-collar uses or it will fail to deliver on its promises for sustainable regions. This is a region where official estimates of African-American unemployment reached 24 percent in 2012—even higher than in 1992 when regional elites promised that the Blue Line would bring jobs and businesses to the communities it serves. If there were ever a time to deliver what we promised with the Blue Line, it’s now. As the City of Los Angeles thinks about how to replace the recently dissolved Community Redevelopment Agency, prioritizing places that already have rail accessibility makes infinite sense. **P²**

The Costs of Transit-Oriented Gentrification

Transit, Development, and Displacement in Boyle Heights

By Will Dominie, Reina/Rey Fukuda, Osvaldo G. García,
Hector Gutierrez and Lucero Herrera

LOCATED just across the river from downtown Los Angeles, Boyle Heights is one of the city's most disinvested, culturally rich and dynamic neighborhoods. It is also a neighborhood struggling to shape its future, as new transportation investment (Metro's Gold Line) promises increased access and economic development, yet also displaces existing bus lines, residents, businesses and ways of life.



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Reina/Rey Fukuda, who received their master's degree from the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy in 2011, is now a community organizer and researcher with the East LA Community Corporation (www.elacc.org).



Osvaldo García, Lucero Herrera and Hector Gutierrez are students in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at UCLA.



Photos by Osvaldo García & Hector Gutierrez

In this article, we explore this tension. In particular, we present the results of research we conducted in support of the East LA Community Corporation (ELACC) and the Bus Riders Union's (BRU) efforts to win equitable community-serving, community-driven development and transit.

Our research explored two inter-related questions. First, we conducted interviews with small businesses in Boyle Heights to understand how Metro's recent investments have affected their community, and to assess whether gentrification is taking place.

Second, we used statistical analysis to determine the likely effects of gentrification on transit ridership, responding to plans to remake neighborhoods like Boyle Heights as green, transit-oriented developments (TOD), which are often targeted to attract wealthier residents.

We find that while TODs have potential environmental and economic benefits, if done without a community focus they can also become powerful agents for gentrification and displacement—perpetuating social injustices and undermining their potential ecological benefits.



Inside a glitzy Gold Line station.



Boyle Heights and the Gold Line: All that Glitters?

Since its settlement in the 1880s, Boyle Heights has been a culturally rich haven for immigrants prohibited from residing in Anglo/white neighborhoods by violence, redlining and restrictive covenants. Today, Boyle Heights, which is almost entirely Latino, is among the city's lowest income neighborhoods. It also has extremely high unemployment rates and is marked by physical decay and poor housing conditions. A large proportion of residents do not have cars and depend on bus services provided by Metro, Los Angeles County's transit agency, to access jobs, health care, social networks and other essential destinations. In these conditions, community development organizations such as ELACC, which has worked to improve Boyle Heights for the past seventeen years, face an uphill battle.

After decades of neglect, the 2009 opening of Metro's new light rail Gold Line appeared to offer some promise of change. Transit access was expected to improve, providing mobility for those most in need. Metro acquired a number of vacant properties around the new transit line, and many residents hoped they could be used for affordable housing, small businesses and a much needed grocery store. New transit lines often bring increased investments from both the public and private sectors, and residents hoped to channel resources toward community priorities.

Additionally, planners and some residents believed that the Gold Line could help catalyze TOD, which is expected to reduce vehicle travel and boost transit ridership by making it easy to get around without a car.

In the years since the Gold Line opened, many of these expected benefits have failed to materialize. While the light rail does offer new transit options, its expense has prompted Metro to cut nearby bus lines—the 30 and the 31—as well as other routes throughout the county. Also, although new investment and development does appear to be flowing into the neighborhood, these efforts have largely not matched the community's priorities. Instead, Metro has leased vacant land to a national chain pharmacy, threatening two nearby, family-owned pharmacies, and has stalled attempts to build housing affordable to very low-income households. As residents witness the early stages of gentrification, they are concerned that public investment and transit access will lead to their displacement by higher income newcomers.

Community Responses: ELACC's Metro Community Benefits Campaign

In response, over the past five years ELACC has built an alternative vision for Boyle Heights through their Metro Community Benefits Campaign. This campaign aims to resist gentrification by ensuring accountable development in Boyle Heights based on the following

demands: 1) meaningful community collaboration; 2) more affordable housing; 3) good economic development, including opportunities for local small business, street vendors, and other good jobs; and 4) the preservation of Boyle Heights culture. To further these last two goals, ELACC has begun to focus on small businesses, or *tiendas*. These are an essential part of Boyle Heights culture and are also the economic engine of the neighborhood, providing residents with employment and creating a tax base to sustain the community.

We sought to contribute to ELACC's campaign by collecting testimonies from Boyle Heights' small business owners and employees. We created a 16 question survey to record accounts of Metro's impact on small businesses before, during and after the development of the Gold Line. We conducted a total of fifty-nine interviews along four key sites in the vicinity of the rail line. Surveys were given in Spanish and English, allowing the research team to engage and build trust with interviewees by letting them share their perspectives in their own language.

LEFT

Mariachi Plaza at 1st and Boyle Avenue with a new Gold Line station.

RIGHT TOP

Boyle Heights businesses along the Gold Line corridor

MIDDLE

Boyle Heights mural on the Cesar Chavez bus corridor.

BOTTOM

\$24.6 million Boyle Hotel renovation project, located on the edge of Mariachi Plaza and the new Gold Line station.



What We Found: Small Business Survey

We found that Boyle Heights is indeed a neighborhood in transition. Following the opening of the Gold Line, respondents reported cleaner streets, increased police enforcement, an overall decline in crime and vandalism, increased foot traffic and a growing influx of white and African-American patrons. Respondents also observed a high turnover rate for businesses, and an increase in the number of national retailers in the neighborhood. While less than one-third of the businesses surveyed had been in Boyle Heights for five years or less, nearly half of those had opened within the past year. Most respondents also reported a loss of community assets, particularly the elimination of local food markets, a laundromat and a theater.

Rail ridership among surveyed businesses was low, although 91 percent felt satisfied with the Gold Line. Contrary to our expectations, two-thirds of respondents indicated they did not use the new Metro rail, and 54 percent of those surveyed did not live in the community and were dependant on automobiles to get around. The remainder of survey respondents indicated their primary mode of transportation was the Metro bus line rather than the Gold Line.

When asked if they had been a part of the planning process or community input meetings facilitated by Metro at any point in regard to the Gold Line and other joint development projects, we found that a staggering 81 percent of respondents had not participated in or been asked to participate in these meetings. This finding suggests that Metro has not meaningfully provided for community participation, despite the large effects their actions have had on the neighborhood.



Photo: Rudy Espinoza

Planning in the Streets metro Action, June 7, 2012

Overall, although the Gold Line has improved some of the conditions of the neighborhood, it appears to have also fueled the displacement of small businesses and the rapid change of Boyle Heights culture, as big chain stores are starting to sprout in the neighborhood.

The Promise and Peril of Transit-Oriented Development in Los Angeles

These changes are echoed throughout Los Angeles. Boyle Heights is among a number of low-income Los Angeles neighborhoods slated for dramatic change under the City's Sustainable Transit Communities program, the County's Renew Plans and Metro's Joint Development program. In each case, planners aim to boost transit ridership, decrease driving and build a more sustainable city by placing more people within close walking distance of transit and making non-automotive travel more attractive.

Yet, this type of TOD can be deeply problematic. While planners and developers often include a proportion of affordable housing in new TOD (as of 2010, Metro was averaging 22 percent), the focus is often on attracting new middle- to high-income residents. As a recent (2011) study completed for the Los Angeles Planning Department notes: "The same features that are likely to attract new demand to the study area may also cause displacement of existing residents. By attracting households with higher incomes, the potential increases for existing residents to be displaced as housing prices and the cost of living increase."

Displacement can have disastrous human consequences as residents are forced to move further from jobs, schools, transit and social networks. Recent studies imply that the gentrification of transit station areas can also exact significant environmental costs by replacing core transit riders—generally low-income people and people of color—with higher-income households who own and use cars. However, we are aware of no published research that tests whether rail station gentrification and decreasing transit use are specifically related.

To answer this question, we examined these dynamics in Los Angeles station areas over the last two decades, testing whether gentrification has changed driving and

transit use for residents living within a half mile of rail stations. We used Census data from 1990 and 2010 to track changes in driving and transit use, and to identify gentrifying neighborhoods (based on changes in income, race/ethnicity, educational attainment and occupation). We then used a statistical technique called linear multiple regression to control for variables such as density, transit density and location, and to isolate the effects of gentrification on travel choices.

What We Found: Statistical Analysis

The results of this analysis are striking. Although not all Los Angeles transit stations have gentrified over the last two decades, many did. Those that did lost transit riders and gained drivers much faster than the rest of the county. These effects are quite robust—gentrification is the most powerful predictor of changes in neighborhood transit use. Controlling for other factors, the neighborhoods with the most gentrification (at the 95th percentile) lost 330 more transit riders and gained 310 more drivers than those with the least gentrification (at the 5th percentile). Additionally, households making over \$40,000 correlate with decreases in transit use and increases in driving, while lower income households boosted transit use and decreased driving. Since transit riders in Los Angeles are overwhelmingly low-income people, immigrants and people of color, it is perhaps not surprising that where these groups have been displaced, transit use has declined.

Additionally, after controlling for other factors, where Metro has partnered with private developers to facilitate development (called Joint Development), those station areas have seen decreased transit ridership. While it is not clear that this development is directly causing these losses, it is clear that this program is not meeting its goals of increasing transit ridership.

Conclusions

Our research suggests that both Boyle Heights and Los Angeles are at a crossroads. The coming of the Gold Line has brought opportunities for economic development, improved transit access and environmental sustainability. Yet rail transit investments and concurrent policy initiatives of the City, County

and Metro also threaten to further reduce bus service and displace existing residents and business in neighborhoods like Boyle Heights. Unfortunately, our small business survey suggests that these processes are already underway in this neighborhood.

Furthermore, our statistical analysis indicates that gentrification is likely to decrease transit ridership and increase driving in the areas around rail stations. These findings suggest that current TOD practice, with its emphasis on attracting wealthier residents to new, mixed-income development, is entirely counter-productive. Indeed, if TOD is to be at all successful as a green development paradigm in communities like Boyle Heights, it will need to be totally reconceived as housing for those who we know actually use transit—primarily low-income people and people of color.

The work of ELACC, and other organizations like the BRU, to fight the displacement of existing residents, business, cultures and bus lines is therefore a crucial step in ensuring equity and sustainability. Over the next few years, these organizations will continue to push toward this vision.

Because they control land, transit funding, and TOD planning processes across the entire region, Metro has an essential role in making this vision a reality, a role they have as yet been largely unwilling to assume. We recommend that Metro reorient their transit and real estate efforts to truly serve communities like Boyle Heights. Specifically, Metro should: meaningfully include community input in Joint Development processes; prioritize truly affordable (affordable to very-low-income households earning \$40,000 or less) housing and small businesses in these processes; restore the one million hours of bus service cut over the last five years; and prevent further bus cuts. Many of these actions should be codified in a revised Joint Development policy as well as in Metro's upcoming TOD policy.

As one of the first low-income communities slated for TOD, what happens in Boyle Heights has the potential to ripple throughout Los Angeles. Will Los Angeles prioritize the needs of low-income residents, transit riders and *tiendas*, and in doing so move toward environmental and economic sustainability, or will it build a city that is exclusive, unjust and dominated by the car? **P²**

The Greening of Los Angeles

Filling the Mostly Empty Glass

By Max Tomaszewski

IN THE FIELD OF CITY PLANNING there is little mystery about the relationship between urban land use patterns and climate change. Los Angeles's auto-centric design promotes automobile travel and therefore locks most residents into extensive use of greenhouse gas-emitting fossil fuels. These emissions, which contribute immensely to climate change, have pushed the atmosphere's carbon content to dangerous levels, with some effects, such as extreme weather events and the timing of the seasons, already observable.

In Los Angeles, auto-centric development blankets the metropolis from the foothills of the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and Verdugo Mountains to the Pacific coastline. An extensive freeway network connects the different patches of this urban quilt, now over seventy years old. Horizontal, automobile-centered development has made Los Angeles an icon for urban sprawl, congestion and air and water pollution. Concerns once focused primarily on issues of smog have shifted to the greenhouse gases responsible for climate change.

These problems are compounded by Los Angeles's vast, non-ecological legacy of land use policies and transportation infrastructure. Currently, separated land uses, extensive freeway networks and limited pedestrian and public transportation services compel most residents and visitors to rely on automobile travel. Frequently these journeys are lengthened by freeway congestion. The need to travel long distances and the excessive time required to make those trips contribute to LA's well-earned reputation as one of this planet's least sustainable cities. While this situation is grim, there are clearly many policy and program options available to transform the

Los Angeles metropolitan area. The purpose of this article is to explain how this could be done through existing programs and practices that are already working in other cities and could be grafted onto Los Angeles. In other words, there are no technological or theoretical barriers, only the political and economic ones maintained by the city's elected officials and commercial interests.

The makeover is based on one straightforward principle: in order to make Los Angeles a more compact city, new development tactics, policies and infrastructure must be implemented to enable residents to live comfortably and sustainably within a smaller area.

Existing Policies

On paper Los Angeles has begun to address sprawl through multiple angles of attack. Within the General Plan's Land Use, Air Quality and Transportation Elements, many programs are identified that would reduce congestion and promote more sustainable development.

For example, one General Plan goal, adopted in 1996 but unchanged, is "to create safe, livable and sustainable neighborhoods." This section explains that "mixing uses within projects, [. . .] locating housing in proximity to a mix of uses and developing transit-oriented district plans" are some of the methods by which neighborhoods may become more sustainable. The General Plan specifically identifies the City's commitment to mixed-use boulevards, pedestrian- and transit-priority districts and multi-family developments to reduce sprawl and citywide automobile use.

Furthermore, the Transportation Element of the General Plan also clearly supports the improvement of transit services and increased focus upon transit-



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and pedestrian-friendly site designs, including an expansion of bus services, transit-oriented development, curb management for pedestrian areas and the use of alternative (and eventually zero-emission) fuels in fleet vehicles. Furthermore, the recently adopted Los Angeles Bicycle Plan represents still another planning effort to “transform Los Angeles from an auto-centric city to one with a multi-modal transportation system that includes not only cars and trucks, but also buses, trains, pedestrians and cyclists.”

On paper these General Plan policies and programs offer a solution to sprawl, congestion and pollution. If properly adopted and enhanced by a full range of actual public improvements, the dense, mixed-use development and alternative mode infrastructure proposed by the General Plan would substantially alter Los Angeles’s physical design and reduce travel time, the need for extensive travel and automobile reliance—resulting in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, the emphasis is on proper adoption because so far there is little evidence that the official policies correspond to actual funded programs. Furthermore, the City of Los Angeles has abandoned all monitoring programs to measure and assess the implementation of these well-intentioned policies. As a result, the City’s adopted sustainability agenda remains largely unimplemented.

Recommendations

In *Green Metropolis*, David Owen argues that Manhattan’s combination of mass transit and compact and pedestrian-friendly urban design dictates sustainable living. Conversely, Los Angeles’s urban sprawl, automobile-oriented infrastructure and private development promote unsustainable personal behavior. In both cities, residents and visitors have no choice but to live within the limitations of the built environment. Therefore, creating a more sustainable and less sprawled Los Angeles requires multiple changes in urban design and infrastructure that will, in turn, transform individual behavior on a citywide scale. What would this entail?

First, land use policies must be revised to diminish the need for long-distance travel. Despite its General Plan, Los Angeles still suffers from dramatic separations of land uses. Residents and visitors must utilize their cars and the freeways for access to the city’s widely dispersed commercial and residential assets. The best

solution to this dilemma is mixed-use development. A concentration of diverse uses at a single site enables a more sustainable outcome. Quite simply, an individual does not need to go far if his/her needs are within walking distance. Mixed-use development creates a more compact neighborhood, less automobile congestion and less greenhouse gas emissions due to reduced car use.

Similarly, transit-oriented development (TOD) places residential and commercial activities near major public transit hubs. TOD further reduces automobile reliance by providing easy access to public transportation for visitors and residents. To be effective, however, TOD must incorporate a full range of complimentary on- and off-site improvements, such as street furniture, newspaper vending machines and pay phones, street vendors and kiosks, ADA curb-cuts and widened walkways, tree canopies, street lighting and bike lanes. Based on Owen’s work, such improvements complete the walkable street environment needed to scale back the auto-centric urban environment. By refocusing urban design away from the convenience of the automobile and toward the bicyclist and pedestrian, a more sustainable Los Angeles could be built.

Although TOD often results in a certain degree of gentrification, this concern by no means undermines the importance of urban design and policy reform. In the past, influxes of wealthier residents to revamped neighborhoods have perpetuated personal automobile use and its malignant effects. Higher income arrivals are reluctant to relinquish the convenience of their cars. But that does not mean that TOD should be abandoned as one particular angle of attack against LA’s unsustainable sprawl. Old habits may be hard to break, but David Owens demonstrates how alterations in urban design cause far-reaching changes in personal behavior. Furthermore, the traffic demand management programs mentioned later in this article may bolster TOD’s success. The increased convenience of public transit in conjunction with a restructuring of freeway and traffic operations further paves the way for a more sustainable city in the future.

While this comprehensive makeover of Los Angeles sounds like fantasy, these outcomes have already been partially achieved in Vancouver, San Francisco, Portland and Boston. Even some portions of Los Angeles successfully demonstrate the transformative effects of such policies. For example, Old Pasadena

and Larchmont Boulevard are examples of thriving business districts that have implemented some pedestrian-oriented practices. In addition to whittling away at automobile use, walkability presents unique economic opportunities for these communities by enhancing the appeal of local commercial hubs. The practices put in places in these communities provide a clear example of these pedestrian principles that could be rolled-out on a citywide basis.

Additionally, the Los Angeles region should implement an urban growth boundary to curb continued outward expansion into adjacent suburban areas. This urban growth boundary would encourage vertical development, as opposed to the continuous horizontal crawl along the city limits. Portland, Oregon, has already demonstrated the benefits of such a boundary. An urban growth boundary would be a powerful stand against urban sprawl and signal an important message of change in the Los Angeles region.

Another aspect of comprehensive transformation would revolve around the quality and extent of public transportation system. Public transportation must be improved to satisfy demand and simultaneously address the negative effects of urban sprawl. An expanded transit system based on heavy rail, light rail, bus rapid transit and traditional buses would establish a dense enough transit system to reduce the city's notorious traffic congestion. More specifically, METRO and LADOT must increase the number and size of their public transit service vehicles to encourage and accommodate larger numbers of passengers. Articulated buses should be employed in increasing number. Light rail development should continue, as well as expansion of the current heavy rail subway system. In essence, Los Angeles's public transportation system must become bigger and better, so that it can actually meet the needs of a dispersed public.

In addition, the quality of service must improve dramatically. For example, every bus stop should feature a covered shelter with signage that indicates bus arrival and departure times. More importantly, public transportation needs to have shorter headways, reduced fares and arrive and depart according to schedule. Furthermore, public transportation should be given priority access on streets and freeways. Public transit deserves exclusive right-of-way lanes; the vehicle-traffic signal coordinating systems employed currently by BRT should

be applied to all public transportation vehicles. Every measure must be taken to make public transportation the fastest, safest and most convenient travel option.

In this manner, Los Angeles could mitigate traffic congestion and address environmental concerns associated with high levels of automobile emissions. Furthermore, all of this is based on existing technology and infrastructure, the design and effectiveness of which has been developed and demonstrated in other urban areas, and, in some cases, locally.

A final method involves congestion and traffic demand management programs. Since LA cannot be comprehensively re-engineered and re-designed, certain programs must be implemented to correct the flawed design of the city's existing transportation infrastructure. One such option is congestion pricing through freeway tolls, or specifically high-occupancy vehicle toll lanes (HOT lanes). These tactics are already slated for implementation on portions of the I-10 and I-110 freeways, and their success at reducing congestion and travel time will help determine the extent of the role congestion pricing has to play in the sustainable future of LA.

Conclusion

Reversing Los Angeles's auto-centric urban design and infrastructure is a key component of its General Plan. Furthermore, the General Plan identifies many key strategies for transforming Los Angeles into a more sustainable, less automobile-dependent city. However, this document is not comprehensive enough to offset many decades of unsustainable growth. In addition to promoting carefully designed mixed-use and transit-oriented development, the city's streets and sidewalks must be redeveloped for walkability and bikeability. The City must make every effort to shift development in ways that convenience pedestrians, transit riders and bicyclists over drivers.

Other appropriate measures include the creation of an urban growth boundary to shut off further sprawl development. The City must also work to improve and expand the public transportation system within its existing boundaries. The accompanying reductions in car use, roadway congestion, travel time and pollution will begin to reverse the effects of urban sprawl, and could transform Los Angeles into a highly sustainable city. **P²**



Public Safety or Public Insecurity

Who Watches the Watchers?

By Jacqueline Leavitt and Hamid Khan

Technology is Everywhere

A recent planning graduate applied for a position in a big city planning department. Upon arrival she learned that she would be videotaped during the interview; already nervous, she did not ask why or what would happen to the tape afterwards. The department may have good reasons to use technology; perhaps it protects against lawsuits and/or a supervisor can assess the candidate if she is absent from the face-to-face interview. We offer this vignette as an example of the ubiquitousness of technology in the everyday life of the urban planner regardless of her/his politics and the “almost” normal acquiescence (the applicant did share the story with a professor) from those who are used to their moves being tracked when shopping, travelling, parking and moving around the built environment.

Is there a reason that urban planners need to pay more attention to technology than as a screening device and to question the effect on planning? We believe so because of the ways in which technology’s broader reach is used in the name of domestic security. We identify domestic security as ways in which society should provide the potential for every person to live in a safe and secure

environment, with access to decent affordable housing, health care, education and employment, and free from oppression by the police and the military. This differs from those who define domestic security as protection from external threats and support the Department of Homeland Security funding technology that tracks and collects data based on “suspicious” criteria.

We are not arguing against technology but use two examples from urban planning to call attention to the unintended consequences of certain tools. For example, technology may be applied the most in transportation planning. Still, it may come as a surprise that the common cell phone is being tested as a means of tracking movement. In Raleigh, North Carolina, for example, AirSage has tested a pilot project in “movement analytics,” in which bulk data—cell phone sightings on different areas—can be used in origin-destination studies over a wider range and including more people compared to older surveys that cost more, reach fewer numbers of people and do not cover as large an area. The planner from the Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization that works on this project is admittedly struggling over how the data could be used, quick to point out that individual tracking of each cell phone user is not occurring, and states that his interest is for transportation and population predictions. But questions remain. The reporter for *Atlantic Cities* that covered this issue (“You Already Own the Next Most Important Transportation Planning Tool,” February 12, 2012) asks whether cell phone data could be used to estimate numbers of people at events such as protests, political inaugurations and rallies.



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In another example, information technology is being widely used in 102 cities. Electronic smart grids in transportation, energy, housing and parking are being pilot tested in Holyoke, Massachusetts, and a section of Amsterdam, Holland. Songdo City, South Korea, a new city being made in the Yellow Sea, will be completely wired underground and within the walls of buildings. Tracey Schelmetic, who covered this issue in “The Rise of the First Smart Cities,” (*ThomasNet News*, September 20, 2011) ends her coverage by rhetorically asking what a smart government would be and responds that it “is defined as an administration that integrates information, communication and operational technologies; optimizes planning, management and operations across multiple domains, process areas and jurisdictions; and generates sustainable public value.”

It is around the issues of who controls the use of data, for what purpose and whose public value that this article examines the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD)

Suspicious Activity Reporting initiative which began in March 2008.

Homeland Security’s Definition and Practice

The Department of Homeland Security funds activities related to alleged breaches of security. The LAPD, under Special Order 1 or Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR), lists and identifies criminal and noncriminal behavior that is reportable; if observed by a police officer or reported to a police officer by a third party, a report is filed—without the subject of the report having to be informed. Shooting a photograph, drawing diagrams, using binoculars, taking notes and asking about hours of operations are some of the non-criminal activities that deem a person suspect of engaging in “pre-operational planning.” The data can be transmitted to a regional fusion center that is charged with coordinating information on individuals from all agencies. This method was established in the wake of 9/11, which revealed

that the many-headed government agencies were unaware of the counter-terrorism data other agencies were collecting. The assumption is that if enough data is collected, the nation’s security will be protected. In effect, the almost 10,000 sworn police officers of the LAPD have become the arms and legs of Homeland Security. If this wasn’t enough, in November of 2009, the LAPD launched the iWATCH program, promoting community and neighborhood involvement: “See Something, Say Something.” In other words, recruiting *community informants*.

All this is part of the newest model for police departments, “Intelligence-Led Policing,” or more appropriately, “Pre-Emptive Policing” in intent and practice, where data is mined to detect possible behavior patterns that can then be modeled as a catalyst for “sending in the cavalry.” We could well ask why this isn’t merely a sign of the police and the military keeping pace with the digital age, much like any other business that swipes our credit cards and keeps tabs on where we



Photo: Kim McGill

Getting ready to march to the Police Commission meeting



Photo: Amitis Morevalli

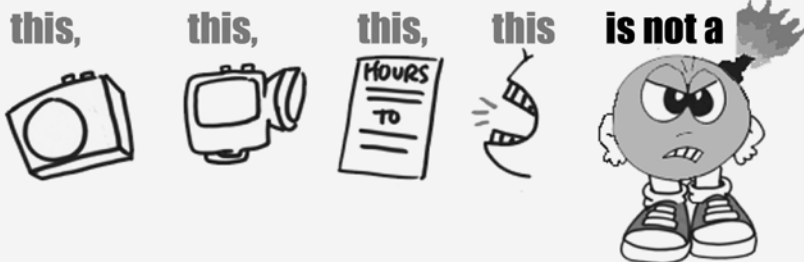
Town hall meeting

go, who we see and what we buy. But the LAPD is not your typical business. It is a public agency whose funding through Homeland Security enables it to purchase high-end equipment (unlike the city of Lancaster, two hours north of LA; to our knowledge the LAPD has not acquired drones) with little if any public accountability.

Here's something from CBS on May 15, 2012: "While the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has not yet applied for an application to fly drones over our skies, its Homeland Security chief Bob Osborne said drones could be in the department's future—with some caveats."

Social justice advocates in LA say that SAR is unacceptable. Justifying policing based upon a hunch not only turns *innocent till proven guilty* on its head, it is also a license for racial profiling. An array of organizations and individuals coalesced in 2011 as Stop LAPD Spying coalition, first as an advisory group that developed an outreach campaign to various communities, grassroots organizations and college and university campuses. The first town hall meeting was held in March 2012. Questions abounded about the definition of a suspicious activity, training of officers, use of the data, length of time data stays in a database and how a person will know. Issues about privacy, checks and balances, transparency, accountability and verification of the effectiveness of the SARs "experiment" has neither been adequately answered nor guaranteed. Unlike the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and

The process for collecting and monitoring police surveillance on local communities under Special Order 1.



1. A police officer observes "something suspicious" and fills out a S.A.R. - Suspicious Activity Report. Under Special Order 1 this means reporting on non-criminal activities such as taking a picture of a building, drawing or painting a landmark, drawing diagrams or taking notes in public, using binoculars, or inquiring about a building's hours of operation.

2. All S.A.R.s are sent to the Counter Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau (CTCIB) of the LAPD's Major Crimes Division (MCD).



3. The S.A.R.s' information is often shared with the Joint Regional Information Center also known as the **Fusion Center**.

4. The S.A.R.s' information can then be uploaded onto the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) a National Database.



Will we sleep or will we fight?

Illustration: Kim McGill

LAPD Red Squads, operations such as LAPD's Special Order 1 and iWATCH are neither covert nor illegal but legitimize police spying, allowing the LAPD to open secret files—legally—and gather unlimited data on innocent Angelinos. Furthermore LAPD's program is being replicated in every major city in the United States with the stated intent to incorporate every federal and local law enforcement agency including campus and transit police in the country into this program.

Why Worry

The tactics of the LAPD have been criticized for decades. In 2011, officers displaced the Occupiers from City Hall park; on May Day 2007 they waded into a peaceful rally in MacArthur Park firing rubber bullets; from 1997 until today misconduct and corruption in the anti-gang unit stationed at the Rampart Division led to lawsuits, some of which are still unresolved; and in 1992 then LAPD Chief Daryl F. Gates opted to go to a fundraising dinner rather than take command when riots broke out after the jury returned a not guilty verdict of the policemen who attacked Rodney King. Each transgression leads to handwringing and the mayor or police commission appointing leading citizens to investigate the charges. The establishment of a police force in the nineteenth century was to replace vigilante law in a lawless town; the professionalization after World War II is set against an image of policemen "on the take" in movies like *Mulholland Drive*, *Chinatown*

and *Pulp Fiction*. Individual policemen can take heroic steps in their efforts to protect and serve but the direction being taken in the new digital age is suspect in itself.

Under Chief William H. Parker, a pattern of paramilitary training modeled after the U.S. Marine Corps took hold. In 2003, almost forty years after Parker's death, the Rand Corporation recommended a more "refined, corporate" approach. As worrying as that history is, so is a legacy from the 1950s of the police supporting the FBI who went undercover and infiltrated organizations including the Black Panthers, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the New Left. In the 1960s, the COINTELPRO was designed to counter the perceived threat of domestic terrorism. Paul Wolf, with contributions from Bob Brown, Kathleen Cheever, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn and others presented detailed testimony to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism. The report asserted that the FBI was "America's political police," using the criminal justice system, U.S. Postal Service, telephone services and the Internal Revenue Services to undermine popular movements.

The record of police behavior does not inspire confidence that the LAPD is there to provide security in all or for all communities; their role of social controllers is particularly felt among homeless and poor folks, youth, people of color and political activists.

Some Larger Questions for Planners

Larger questions about the meaning of security and the creeping normalization that has occurred are also being discussed among much of the public, who do not question whether the money spent on technology can be used in better ways to help create face-to-face communities. SARs is another version of the hijacking of public space to privatize our actions and another form of racial profiling. Without a healthy debate on the meanings of security and ways to achieve it we fall victims to the culture of fear and insecurity. Especially in a difficult economic climate when people's lives may be fragile, it is especially important to embrace the other and question anything that furthers differences. Planners, whose forays into security are usually about Oscar Newman's defensible space, Jane Jacobs's eyes on the street and the withering away of public space, are in positions to raise questions about the ways in which new mixed-use designs, transportation-oriented development and improvements in existing neighborhoods treat security. Progressive planners talk a fair amount about what community is; issues about security can help sharpen this.

P²

Seventh Generation: How Imperial Decline Contributes to Urban Decay in Los Angeles

by Dick Platkin

continued from page 2

At the same time they are systematically deregulating private real estate investment and environmental review processes in the misguided, neoliberal perception that investors will then rush in for another building boom—a tide that will lift all ships.

To their credit, a small part of their calculation might be correct. There certainly are enough dormant piles of capital stashed around this planet to build many new shopping complexes and fortified upscale apartment buildings in the ritzier parts of Los Angeles. The city's fathers and mothers may even find a few bold investors to plunk money into the distressed inner-city neighborhoods that revolted twenty years ago in the largest urban insurrection since New York draft riot of 1863. Even today, a drive through these scarred neighborhoods reveals how little they have changed. In fact, some of the empty lots on major streets, such as Vermont Boulevard, are remnants of fires set in 1992 by local residents in their revolt against police repression and poverty.

Unlike the previous Watts Rebellion of 1965, which was a catalyst for public investment, much of it from the federal government, in the two decades since 1992 public investment has dwindled. Furthermore, the dismantling of the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), one of the few remaining sources of public investment, has further reinforced these cutbacks.

In response to these developments, local officials have never mentioned the obvious: military spending, coupled with tax breaks and bailouts for the well off, have totally undermined state and local government.

Neoliberal Nostrums

Instead, city officials have resorted to the same neoliberal nostrums associated with Reagan and Clinton: deregulation of private investment. They see a flush real estate sector as their municipal cure-all. While



Fortified residential community



there has been a minor boom in illegal garage conversions, McMansions, billboards and supergraphics and marijuana dispensaries, there is little evidence that their arsenal of programs to “unleash” the private sector has made a difference.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Los Angeles’s population has been nearly flat for the past twenty years, with many historic neighborhoods, such as Hollywood, losing population—despite the introduction of subway stations and building subsidies. As for employment, there has been no gain at all, with visible weakening in the city’s core historic industries of construction, heavy manufacturing, garment production and entertainment. In fact, Los Angeles no longer hosts the head office of any Fortune 500 company. Furthermore, the city is still one of the most unequal in the United States, with a Gini coefficient of .49 that places it fifth in the entire country. Another index of economic stagnation and decline, unemployment, has been stuck at an *official* rate of 12 to 14 percent since 2009.

A more careful look at the planning process in Los Angeles reveals how this decline is unfolding. It also reveals why further deregulation will compound the deteriorating conditions experienced by most Los Angeles neighborhoods.

In the boom years prior to the 1992 uprising, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning had 350 em-

ployees serving a population of 3.2 million people. In response to lawsuits from the politically powerful Canyon and Hillside Federation, local slow-growth movements in many neighborhoods and a legal mandate from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the department undertook an ambitious planning program. The first component was AB 283, an enormous zoning program that comprehensively revamped the city’s parcel-level zoning and plan designations to bring them into correspondence with each other.

At approximately the same time, many local community organizations responded to dreadful commercial projects with such sustained political pressure that the City Council adopted a dizzy array of overlay zoning districts. In addition to Specific Plans, there were HPOZs (Historical Preservation Overlay Districts), CDOs (Community Design Overlay Districts), PODs (Pedestrian Overlay Districts) and SNAPs (Station Neighborhood Area Plans). Recent additions include CPIOs (Community Plan Implementation Overlays) and RFAs (Residential Floor Area Overlays) to stop mansionization. While most neighborhoods have *not* benefited from these protective shields, many squeaky wheels did get oiled.

The final leg of this triangle was a legal directive from the EPA that forced Los Angeles to update its General Plan. The resulting plan, the General Plan Framework Element, was based on data from



Overhead wires



McMansion under construction

the 1990 Census and adopted in 1996, with a 2010 horizon year. Its intent was to politically balance neighborhoods and real estate developers through a policy of growth neutrality and program of extensive monitoring. An exemplary General Plan, the Framework was totally ignored, except for when a few policies that could be taken out of context to justify large private developments were used to do this.

Reversal of Planning Initiatives

Likewise, the plethora of zoning overlay ordinances ground to a halt because a change in governing philosophy was reinforced by staff reductions. The original impetus of many of the planning initiatives from the 1980s and 1990s was to manage market forces through carefully prepared plans and zoning rules. But, by the late 1990s until today, unpredictable market forces have prevailed. In this period the city's planning and zoning processes have been weakened to the point that the City's elected officials and their appointed managers consider the planning process to be little more than an irritating barrier to real estate investment.

For example, the General Plan Framework Element seriously overestimated the city's population, projecting 4.3 million people by 2010. Even though the U.S. Census Bureau only counted 3,750,000 people in 2010, the General Plan was never updated to reflect the new data. It has been left to languish, demonstrating Gabriel Kolko's insight that without the ability to predict, there is no ability (or intent) to plan. In the case of Los Angeles, however, both prediction and planning have been jettisoned. Old Census data, left over from the boom era, is still used by a City Planning Department whose staff was sliced in half by budget cuts. These old population numbers are now used to justify (but not predict) expansive programs of up-zoning and up-planning disconnected from the city's actual demographic and economic trends.

Instead, small neighborhoods, about 1/35 of Los Angeles, are being given zoning makeovers labeled Updates. These Updates have only the most superficial connection to the General Plan, without any

link to observable demographic trends. Instead, their role is to green light real estate speculation by allowing much larger and taller projects to be quickly approved, while ignoring plan and project monitoring or investment in public services and infrastructure, such as underground utility wires. Unfortunately, or luckily, in seven years of work on these Community Plan Updates, only the Hollywood Update has been presented to the public. Approved by the City Council in June 2012, lawsuits will tie it up in the courts for an extended period of time.

Although the Hollywood Update was intended to be a template for the remaining thirty-four Community Plan Updates, staff shortages and a loss of expertise has continuously stalled the release of these plans. While their exact status has been carefully kept under wraps, their slowdown has, however, become an unintended blessing for many Los Angeles communities, which had braced themselves for an onslaught of new zoning ordinances permitting much larger buildings that would exceed local infrastructure capacity. Despite years of delay, they are still holding their breath in anticipation of what comes next, in particular lawsuits to block the Hollywood Community Plan Update.

New Forms of Land Use Deregulation

At the same time, the shrunken Department of City Planning has undertaken three programs to further deregulate private land use:

- Many piecemeal amendments to the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) to accelerate applications for discretionary actions from zoning regulations and avoid environmental reviews, public hearings and appeals.
- A new five-year program, recently approved by the Los Angeles City Council, to totally revamp the city's zoning code. The details of this program are still murky, but critical observers assume this is one more effort to deregulate investment in real estate.
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD). In theory, Los Angeles, one of the country's most polluted,

auto-centric cities, desperately needs sustainable development. Unfortunately, the Department of City Planning is promoting TOD on the cheap. While the successful model for TOD consists of a dense mass transit system, local amenities at transit stations, pedestrian improvements such as sidewalk widening and street trees and bike lanes, in Los Angeles TOD has been simplified. Forget the public improvements. Instead, private lots near minimalist transit stations are up-zoned in the belief that developers will then build mostly market-rate apartment houses in run-down neighborhoods.

This combination of a truly stagnant economy and drought in government investment, especially in public infrastructure and services such as education, suggests that these planning schemes are doomed. After all, when the city's air is still toxic, the highways and roads more congested than ever, the transit system embryonic and underfunded, the sidewalks and streets in deplorable shape, the overhead wires and billboards an assault on the eyes and the schools and colleges in tatters, how could most new upscale projects succeed?

While a few projects, such as USC's expansion or a new AEG football stadium in the downtown, might succeed because they are near major employment centers, most new projects will either languish or go belly-up. Local subsidies, usually in the form of the tax breaks favored by the city's elected officials, can temporarily help a few of the well-connected, but the fate of most new projects is sealed.

Private investment, no matter how large or how touted by squadrons of expeditors, publicists and technicians, cannot succeed when the public environs are so stunted and even worse cutbacks are likely.

Furthermore, there is no white knight to rescue Los Angeles. Unlike the 1960s, there are few remaining federal urban programs other than Department of Justice grants for police spying on Muslims and occupiers. As for the State of California, it, too, is in desperate financial shape, with structural deficits decimating the state's public infrastructure and public services for the foreseeable future. Even hopes that the private sector could come to the rescue, truly an idea born of desperation,

have not panned out. Rebuild LA was the business community's program for the Los Angeles neighborhoods decimated in 1992. It only lasted a few years, and its sole legacy is five oversized boxes stored at the library of Loyola Marymount University in West Los Angeles.

Prospects

With no help on the way, and with local officials who consistently manage to poorly play the weak hands they have been dealt, what are the options?

In this case the ball is in the court of the public. While the local campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s that resulted in a new General Plan, many Specific Plans and the wholesale revamping of the city's zoning have fragmented, they have not been forgotten. Los Angeles still has many active community groups and official neighborhood councils. While some neighborhood councils have been hijacked by real estate interests, many still represent highly committed local residents.

Furthermore, most of the neoliberal schemes originating at City Hall have met stiff resistance from local opponents and citywide alliances.

What is needed in Los Angeles, however, is a city-wide political force that can tackle the city's enormous problems. There are two online journalists, Ron Kaye and Ken Draper, who have provided the forum. While their efforts have chiseled at City Hall's veneer and occasionally pried it open enough to peak inside, at this point Los Angeles is, at best, only moving sideways.

For a short time many local activists had great hopes in enormous immigration marches and most recently in Occupy Los Angeles (OLA). While OLA did have hundreds of people living on the grounds of City Hall, few of them managed to successfully analyze what took place within the adjacent building. But OLA has survived, and many people hope that its tenacity, combined with LA's ongoing deterioration, will spark a serious, long-term, fully engaged and deeply analytical revival before another civil disturbance rips the city apart a third time.

P²

Through Whose Lens?

Defining Stakeholders in Planning Little Tokyo

By Susan Nakaoka

“ In the early 1970s I remember going to Little Tokyo for special occasions. If someone was getting married, my grandfather would insist we go to Ginza, a store that carried appliances and electronics, or Rafu Bussan, a gift shop with various vases, dishes, Japanese dolls and other fine items from Japan. If someone died, we would have “China meshi” (Chinese food) at the Far East Café after the funeral services, which were often held at Fukui Mortuary or Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist temple. If someone needed nice photos for their graduation or wedding, we would go to Toyo Miyatake Studio, and although I did not know the history of Toyo Miyatake’s bravery during the camp days (during World War II he smuggled camera parts into the Japanese-American concentration camps to document the experience), I knew that his pictures were supposed to be the best. I remember stomping around in the narrow aisles of Ginza, pretending it was a maze and irritating my parents, who were talking to the Japanese-American owner and wishing I would behave. I remember staring at the Far East Café’s old wood beams and wondering how old they were as plate after plate of food was brought to our tables. I remember when Little Tokyo was an anchor for my family, who lived in a suburb of East Los Angeles but needed a cultural home space in which to center its identity and spirituality. I remember.

ON JUNE 14, 2012, a little over eighty people gathered for a photo exhibit in a restaurant in the Little Tokyo neighborhood of Los Angeles. The photo event was not meant to be art or social documentary, although it ended up being both. Instead, the intent of the exhibit was to display the findings of a community-based research project using the photovoice methodology to elicit community stakeholders’ vision of the cultural and community assets of the area. The initial question of defining stakeholders in this historic ethnic neighborhood was a tricky one. Who are the rightful stewards of planning Little Tokyo? Do the memories of Japanese Americans take precedence over the needs of current residents and business owners, or can they co-exist to plan a historic, living neighborhood?

The Project

The exhibit was the culmination of the first phase of a community asset mapping project that started about a year earlier as a class project for a UCLA urban planning course on community organizing and research taught by Marie Kennedy. Working with community organizers from the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), who were already contemplating an asset mapping project, the UCLA graduate students embarked on the crucial project to document assets



Susan Nakaoka is a doctoral student in urban planning at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and the director of field education at the California State University Dominguez Hills Master of Social Work program. She wishes to acknowledge the student and community based researchers that assisted with this project as well as the support of the Luskin Social Justice Grant, the Graduate Research Mentorship Program and the George and Sakaye Aratani Fellowship at UCLA.

and resources in order to proactively plan the community before “outsiders” swoop in to take advantage of the transit-oriented development related to a new light rail station slated for construction in 2013.

After several months of planning, during which the team attended community meetings and forums hosted by Metro, the transportation agency responsible for the station, it arrived at consensus about the need to internally define the cultural and community assets in order to preempt the inevitable “outside” development that would come with the construction of the station. The team moved forward with the as-

sumption that the true character of Little Tokyo is defined by its historic and cultural meaning, the centrality of small businesses (primarily family-owned micro businesses) and “the people.” Some members of the team focused their efforts on creating GIS asset maps to show trends associated with business development and rents, and the spatial relationships of the proliferation of outside businesses (Starbucks, Johnny Rockets, Office Depot) clustered near the site of the future train station. Others moved forward with a photovoice project to document the community’s voice in the neighborhood planning process.

History

The Little Tokyo area of Los Angeles is a historic ethnic neighborhood that has survived over one hundred years despite residential segregation, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII, urban renewal and gentrification. Consequently, the built environment in Little Tokyo has been shaped by displacement due to racial and socio-economic injustice and consistent community-based resistance to outside development. Outside development is defined as economic investment, building projects and new businesses that originate from stakeholders that have no connection or commitment to the maintenance of the character of Little Tokyo as a historic ethnic enclave or to the current population of low-income residents. For instance, some new businesses may not be Japanese- or Japanese American-owned, but they participate in community meetings and events and support the maintenance of Little Tokyo as a historic district. These businesses are considered an important fabric of the neighborhood and would not be defined as “outsiders.” Community organizers feel that transit-oriented development may bring in the next wave of displacement as some of the historic, small businesses may not survive the construction phase of the station or low-income residents may be pushed out in favor of new market-rate housing complexes.

This threat of displacement comes at a time when the Japanese American population is further geographically dispersed than ever before. Although the connection to Little Tokyo weakens as generations pass, the impor-



Photo: Eddie Escamilla



Photo: Dan Ichinose

TOP

New market-rate condos; commercial brick building in foreground slated for demolition with construction of train station.

BELOW

As riders of the regional connector emerge from the metro station onto the intersection of Central Avenue and First Street, they will see the old and new sites of the Japanese American National Museum cradling the location where Japanese Americans in Los Angeles were forced to assemble before being bused to concentration camps in 1942. It is a site where history was made and the past remembered.

tance of the community to Japanese Americans is still tangible. Newer Japanese immigrants (referred to as *Shin Issei*) congregate there to do shopping and socialize. Older Japanese Americans living in one of several senior housing complexes walk the neighborhood in the mornings and meet friends to eat. Although most Japanese Americans in Southern California live in suburbs in the San Gabriel valley, the Southbay (Torrance and Gardena) or in Orange County, many still return to Little Tokyo to attend events, eat at favorite restaurants, go to church or pay an occasional visit to the Japanese American National Museum. There is even a youth group called *Kizuna*, whose expressed mission is to empower the Nikkei community by “igniting the passion of young Japanese Americans” partly through cultural and political identity workshops that connect the youth to Little Tokyo. Parents come from as far as sixty miles away to bring their youth to these weekly workshops that occur for nine weeks over the summer months.

The centrality of Little Tokyo to Southern California’s Japanese identity and the subsequent claim that the ethnic community lays on the space would seemingly contradict the needs of the current residents who call Little Tokyo home. According to the 2010 Census, the residents of Little Tokyo and the surrounding blocks are 23 percent white, 27 percent African American, 42 percent Asian (of which 19 percent are of Japanese descent and 13 percent of Korean descent) and 20 percent Latino. Although most recent housing development has been market-rate housing, LTSC has made low-income housing a priority and has developed over 150 units in the neighborhood, thus there is a mix of socio-economic classes as well as races. There seems to be an understanding between the two sectors; the ethnic community acknowledges current residents (including a significant number of elderly Japanese and Japanese Americans that live in low-income senior housing developed in the 1970s) and the non-ethnic community respects the historic importance of the space and enjoys the unique character of the small businesses and cultural landmarks.

Photovoice

Because the community is simultaneously a historic ethnic neighborhood and a vibrant living space for

a diverse group of current residents, the question of authenticity and rights to plan the neighborhood are complex. The photovoice method was used in order to provide an avenue for a wide array of stakeholders to contribute to the discussion on defining community. The main research question that participants were asked was: “What are the most important assets in Little Tokyo?”

Photovoice is a qualitative, participatory research methodology developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris to achieve three goals: 1) to empower participants to record and reflect on a critical community issue that affects their lives; 2) to increase their collective knowledge about the specific community issue by providing information and avenues for shared dialogue; and 3) to inform policy makers and the broader community so that transformational change can occur. Thus, the sample of participants must reflect variation in perspective. For example, in a typical residential community, a sample of stakeholders would include youth, senior citizens, business people, members of the religious community, members of any minority groups (ethnic, racial, class, religious, etc.), members of key institutions. However, the historical importance of Little Tokyo as a cultural home space for Japanese Americans creates an interesting complexity in the selection of participants. Can people who do not live in the community still retain rights to define it?

After meetings with our community research team, we decided on key stakeholder categories and eleven participants were recruited to participate by photographing what they consider to be the most vital resources in their community. The sample consisted of three Japanese immigrants (two women living in Little Tokyo’s low-income housing, one man living in market-rate housing, all over the age of 62); one 62-year-old Japanese-American woman (living in market-rate housing in Little Tokyo); three 10-year-old Latino youth (two boys and one girl) that reside in low-income housing in Little Tokyo; two Japanese Americans (one is multi-racial) who do not live in Little Tokyo but are involved in the community; one white female who works in Little Tokyo; and one Latino male who works and resides in Little Tokyo. The team organizing the project was made up of three Japanese Americans (who do not live in Little Tokyo) and one Japanese student.

Eddie Escamilla—

resident manager of low-income housing in Little Tokyo

Late night dining and shopping in Japanese Village Plaza.
"So vibrant with color, music, and appetizing smells."



Dan Ichinose—

lives outside of Little Tokyo; works at Asian Pacific American Legal Center

"Mr. Takatani owns Anzen Hardware on First Street, sharpens knives for some of Los Angeles' best restaurants, and managed world champion Chicano boxer Genaro Hernandez, who fought the likes of Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather, Jr. He was mentored as a boxing manager by my grandfather's brother, 'Sad Sam' Ichinose, an inductee of the International Boxing Hall of Fame. A man who navigates the worlds of haute cuisine and South Central boxing gyms, Mr. Takatani connects my family's roots in Hawai'i to present-day Little Tokyo."

Jayson Yamaguchi—

aged 62, Japanese immigrant living in market rate senior housing

"Keep Going!" Mrs. Fujima at 94 has been teaching at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center ever since it opened in the 1980s.



Myke—

10 years old; resident of Casa Heiwa

Casa Heiwa [low-income housing in Little Tokyo] is a home that people live in. They are there because there are fun things there and there is a manager that helps people that might have problems with things.

Traci Kato-Kiryama—

lives outside of Little Tokyo

Seven-year-old Maiya Grace points to the *Home is Little Tokyo* mural on which her dad, Tony Osumi, was one of the principal muralists.



photovoice in Little Tokyo

History, Art and Small Businesses

The findings of the project included seven themes that resonated with every participant: history, green space, community institutions, businesses, housing, culture and people. By far the most photographed spaces were the Japanese American National Museum, Casa Heiwa (LTSC's first and largest low-income housing building), the Japanese Village shopping plaza and the Japanese American Community and Cultural Center. These themes and spaces were consistent across participants despite differences in age, race and place of residence.

Interestingly, the historical themes revolving around Little Tokyo as a place for early immigrants, the World War II forced removal of Japanese Americans and reverence to Japanese American war veterans were common subjects of photographers regardless of ethnicity or national origin. Also interesting was that Little Tokyo residents of low-income housing photographed their buildings, but Little Tokyo residents of market-rate housing did not. Only one person, a senior resident of low-income housing, photographed the train that comes through the current Little Tokyo station, captioning it: "New Toy for Residents to Explore LA."

Art and small businesses dominated the rest of the photos. Art consisted of photos of public art as well as the bi-monthly event known as Tuesday Night Café, which showcases local poets, musicians and talent. Although food and restaurants were a common theme, more photographed were the people that work in these establishments, reflecting how the relationships with small business owners and staff are integral to community feeling (for example, no one photographed the manager of the local Starbucks, but many photos were taken of other long-time businesses and their staff or of newer Japanese-themed businesses).

Finally, the comments from the photographers provided insight into their thoughts about their community. All participants expressed concern about "change" and about the importance of preserving history. Some mentioned hope for the future, with references to resident's safety and more options for green space. None of the photographers mentioned excitement about the new train station, although

two mentioned great regret about losing old brick buildings and a long-time restaurant, Señor Fish, which will be demolished for the construction.

Conclusions

Japanese Americans' claim to the space known as Little Tokyo requires constant attention and rearticulation. In addition to the changing demographics of neighborhood residents, the demographics of small business owners are also shifting as more Korean owners take over Japanese restaurants and gift shops. Community leaders understand that gentrification, the influx of diverse immigrant groups and the impending transit-oriented development will change the community for good and bad. There is a determination, however, to ensure that the changes will include the continued promise to recognize the historical and cultural significance of the area for Japanese Americans.

A new twist on these changes includes the development project being pursued by LTSC: Budokan of Los Angeles, a multi-sport complex that is designed to bring the ethnic community back to Little Tokyo every weekend for basketball, volleyball and martial arts. Although this development is projected to bring in revenue for current businesses and recreation space for current residents, it is hard to foretell the real impacts at this stage (construction is slated for late 2013 or early 2014).

Current residents and community stakeholders seem to agree that the authenticity of the neighborhood should include the historical commitment to the Japanese American story, but will the future residents and businesses that come with the new transit-oriented development be as committed to this story? The memories and connections to the past of a non-resident ethnic group may be usurped by an incoming wave of newcomers, or, maybe with enough effort, planning and organizing, the character of Little Tokyo will remain intact as it morphs into a new phase of development. **P²**



Big Box Battle Continues

The People versus Walmart in Los Angeles

By Aiha Nguyen

THE FIGHT to keep Walmart out of LA's Chinatown is not about one store or even one issue. It is a debate about whether locally-owned businesses are worthwhile or if mega chain stores are the future of development in LA. It is the conflict between having a job and the value of a job that supports a family. It is about the lack of power in low-income communities and the right of residents to have a say in how their community grows.



Aiha Nguyen is a senior policy analyst with LAANE (Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, www.laane.org). She received her master's degree in urban planning from UCLA.

Photos by Nathanel Lowe

It's easy to just see Walmart as simply a retail store. But this isn't any retailer, and it certainly isn't of the same stripe as the mom-and-pop stores in Chinatown. Target isn't even a good comparison—more like Target, Kroger, Safeway, SuperValu and Costco combined. Walmart is the world's largest retailer and with that much money, power and resources, it controls a lot more than what is stocked on shelves. Walmart has the ability to alter entire neighborhoods, cities and states. This has been proven time and again and even more information about its influence is coming to light. This multi-billion dollar corporation has the ability to affect entire industries, communities, land-use policies and political processes.

While most people know that Walmart is the largest retailer in the world, it can be hard to see what this actually means for how the business is run. Walmart's huge share of the retail market means that it has unrivaled buying power and because of that, it exerts an incredible amount of influence over suppliers, growers, competitors and even land owners. The Vlasic pickle company can tell you all about its abusive relationship with Walmart. An extensive piece by *Fast Company* in 2003 ("The Wal-Mart You Don't Know") exposed how Vlasic was so dependent on Walmart's business that Walmart dictated how much Vlasic could earn rather than Vlasic being able to calculate cost of production and profit. It turned the supplier-retailer relationship on its head and Vlasic was no longer able to decide how it ran its own business—including pricing, production, hiring and wages. Walmart has similar relationships with its other suppliers.

Walmart's increased presence in a market often results in a decline in the wages of retail workers employed by its competitors (see *A Downward Push: The Impact of Wal-Mart Stores on Retail Wages and Benefits*, 2007). In 2004, Los Angeles's major unionized grocery chains, Ralphs, Vons, and Albertsons, used the threat of Walmart's impending entry to cut employee health benefits, hours and pay, and most critically, stall the ability of workers to advance in the workplace—creating dead-end jobs in an industry that has historically allowed workers to lead middle-class lives. As the market leader, Walmart forces other competitors to model their behavior. It is not surprising then to find that Walmart jobs pay so little that many states are subsidizing Walmart's workers. Data analyzed by Good Jobs First found that in twenty-one out of the twenty-three states that publicize state health insurance enrollment data, Walmart had more employees on state-funded health insurance than any other employer.

If some of the largest food retailers in the country can't compete with Walmart, how can a mom-and-pop store? The often repeated assertion that competition will weed out the inferior businesses is ridiculous when it comes to Walmart because there is no competition. While the proposed Walmart in Chinatown is just one store, it still has the vast resources of a multi-billion dollar corporation that can advertise on TV, radio and in print, and even give away millions of dollars in products to gain a foothold while driving out other businesses. There are a number of documented cases of the impact of a Walmart on small businesses (see *Food For Thought: A Case Study of Walmart's Impact on Harlem's Healthy Food Retail Landscape*, Office Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, 2011 and *Walmart's Economic Footprint: A Literature Review prepared by Hunter College Center for Community Development and New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio*, 2010). A recent study in Chicago found 25 percent of small businesses closed within the first year and forty percent within a two-year period of an urban format Walmart opening in one Chicago neighborhood (*The Impact of an Urban Wal-Mart on Area Businesses: An Evaluation of One Chicago Neighborhood's Experience*, 2009).



LEFT

With fists raised high, Chinatown youth Elizabeth Ortega, Kevin Tang and Rodrigo Gonzales march to oppose Walmart's incursion into Chinatown.

ABOVE

Youth activist Flor Alejo represents Chinatown Community for Equitable Development and tells Spanish media why she believes Walmart is bad for Chinatown.

Walmart's enormous resources also allow it to influence the political process at every level of government. The recent upsurge in large corporations and billionaires flooding elections with cash is not limited to the Koch brothers. The Walmart Corporation, Walmart board members, the Walton family and the Walmart Foundation all gave extensively to politicians and initiatives. While some initiatives are focused on economic policies, some are not. Walmart's involvement on the board of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an entity that drafted Arizona's anti-immigrant bill SB1070, Florida's 'Stand Your Ground' law, voter suppression legislation and a number of anti-work and anti-union laws across the country, recently came to light (www.alecexposed.org). At the local level, information from the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission found lobbying expenditures by Walmart increased dramatically in just three years to over half a million dollars. How long will it be before Walmart's vast resources are used to lobby for SB1070 or anti-worker-style laws in California?

On the local level, Walmart has tried to use its weight to thwart the planning process. In 2004, facing opposition from residents and the City Council in Inglewood, California, Walmart drafted its own development plan, without community or city input, and placed it on the ballot. The plan would have essentially exempted Walmart from local planning laws and state-mandated environmental review as well as precluded future public input. The measure failed but it was a sobering moment for planners. Was it possible for a corporation to hijack a planning process designed to specifically address the issues of undue environmental or economic impacts from land development on a community? That was nearly ten years ago, but Walmart continues to pursue these tactics in other municipalities across the country.

Los Angeles passed a Superstores Ordinance in 2004 that prevented supercenters from opening in the city without first undergoing an analysis of the economic impact on communities and a public review. With the Superstores ordinance in place, Walmart is now looking



Wearing bright red CCED (Chinatown Community for Equitable Development) shirts, Chinatown residents, youth and activists come out in full force against Walmart.

at regular-sized grocery stores to get a foothold in Los Angeles. The company continues to take actions that cut existing communities out of the decision-making process. Walmart stealthily brokered a lease and applied for building and safety permits at a site which was already approved for retail use to avoid any public review. Walmart refuses to acknowledge that the store is located in Chinatown, ignoring the surrounding demographics and referring to the store as a downtown store.

This new strategy means that neighborhoods will have no say in how their communities are altered. LAANE (Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy) is challenging Walmart's permits and in doing so is fighting the idea that any development is a good development, that any job is a good job and that only wealthy communities can decide what they want, while poorer neighborhoods must settle for what they can get. The City Council unanimously passed a resolution instructing the City Planning Department to develop an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) protecting Chinatown and to explore how other tools, such as a formula retail ordinance, can balance the desire to preserve the cultural and historic character of Chinatown and its economic base with opportunities for new development. Formula retail ordinances limit the impacts of large chain retail stores (or formula retail stores) on small business corridors. The many small and family-owned businesses in Chinatown, including three supermarkets, currently provide services and jobs for thousands of families. Studies demon-

strate that locally-owned businesses are better generators of economic development than chain stores because these businesses source locally and keep more revenue in the local community. However, a policy just for Chinatown may not be enough. Walmart does not plan on stopping at Chinatown. As progressive planners have been urging for decades, public development policy should take into account the inevitable social costs that a Walmart-type development inflicts on communities. Many of these social costs are not isolated to a specific project. Air pollution, increased traffic, loss of businesses and jobs, declining wages, reliance on public assistance and increased poverty bleed out beyond the site.

While these efforts are helpful and provide models for other cities, the most valuable strategy to come out of the fight in Chinatown has been on the ground. Community meetings are being held, doors are being knocked on and small businesses are speaking out. Some are eager to learn about how planning and development works, what role community members can play in the process and how this can build Chinatown's importance and power. This has also pushed some activists to begin envisioning what they want for Chinatown in the long term. It's just as important to protect this new spring of activism as the businesses and residents that are there. It's an exciting time for the Chinatown community, which has not seen this level of energy in years.

On June 30, 2012, labor and community will participate in one of the largest actions ever in Chinatown

to demonstrate the importance of taking a stand there. Chinatown might be the setting for the first Walmart grocery in Los Angeles, but it represents hundreds of other LA communities that could be next. Challenging Walmart in Chinatown is about fighting for the right of communities to have a voice in the development process, for a strong regional economy that supports families and for keeping Los Angeles progressive. **P²**

Letter to the Editor

The Manufacturing Issue was most interesting, thank you.

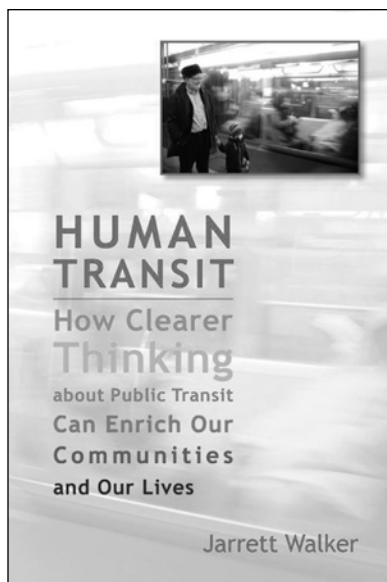
Why is it not possible, when Brownfield areas are under pressure for redevelopment, to demand replacement industrial floor areas—with clear environmental and functional parameters, of course. Most of such rezoning tends to be for much higher densities anyway. Many of today's industrial processes are no longer the toxic, harbour and railway dependent type. Why would several floors of garment manufacturing, for example, not be compatible with residential condos above? Such a mix of uses might even liven up the streetscape.

Yours,
Reggie Modlich

Reggie Modlich is a retired urban planner. A pioneer in the feminist critique of urban planning she helped found Women Plan Toronto and its successor Toronto Women's City Alliance, in which she is still active.

Getting from More Transit to Better Service

Review by Tara Leanne Gallen



Human Transit

How Clearer Thinking about Public Transit Can Enrich Our Communities and Our Lives

Jarrett Walker

Island Press, 2012

256 pages

978-1597269711 hardcover

978-1597269728 paper

Tara Leanne Gallen is a transit planner for Nelson\Nygaard Consulting in Boston, MA. She recently contributed a chapter on transit planning to *Sustainable Transportation Planning*, edited by Jeffrey Tumin.

FOLLOWING polite introductions at parties, I'm often requested to share my profession. I'm a transit planner. Upon hearing this, non-transit riders often enthusiastically support the idea that there ought to be "more transit."

More transit is a great thought, but that could mean almost anything, from more frequent service to routes that crisscross a map and serve every location, to sleek, visible light rail service. What people usually mean is that they want services that *work really well*. This turns out to be a complex request and involves a number of trade-offs and decisions about priorities. It's not as simple as adding "more."

Jarrett Walker's goal in *Human Transit: How Clearer Thinking about Public Transit Can Enrich Our Communities and Our Lives* is to help readers frame the right questions about what is beneficial about transit and to untangle real motivations from preconceived notions so communities can understand and achieve what they want. Walker's mission is to "give you the confidence to form and advocate clear opinions about what kind of transit you want and how that can

help create the kind of city you want." The book's goal is to give readers the analytical framework to have educated conversations about transit, rather than to champion any one particular solution.

Jarrett Walker is a transit planning consultant by trade and author of the eponymous *Human Transit* blog. Walker blends extensive technical knowledge of the inner workings of transit systems with an almost psychosocial insight into human nature. Walker steps gingerly through the myriad components of transit planning, from frequency to fares to estimating demand to making more effective maps. The book lingers on topics that, in more comprehensive transportation planning tomes, are often brushed aside as minor details in order to make room for deeply technical discussions of transit engineering that ultimately fail to meet the needs they set out to address. In some ways, *Human Transit* is the missing manual for the most important set of transit decision-makers: the public.

Walker plays the role of a kind of transit myth-buster, dissecting folk wisdom about service planning and debunking preconceived no-

tions of how transit ought to work based on our intuition, which, as Walker illustrates, can be deceptive and faulty. One of these notions is the technology-first approach to transit planning, wherein the mode (such as light rail, or streetcar, or Bus Rapid Transit) is chosen first and then the specific need for the service is established. As Walker explains, “Technology choices do matter, but the fundamental geometry of transit is exactly the same for buses, trains and ferries. If you jump too quickly to the technology choice question but get the geometry wrong, you’ll end up with a useless service no matter how attractive the technology is.” The organization of services, Walker points out, is ultimately far more

important than what often receives the most attention in the press: sleek technology and lines on the map that may or may not correlate with better or more effective service for the people who want to use it.

In a departure from most discussions on the topic, the book tackles head-on the deeply emotional reactions we often have to topics that arise in the discussion of transit, such as density (“don’t tell me where to live”) and financing (“transit should pay for itself”). Part of the book’s appeal is Walker’s simultaneous demonstration of empathy for natural human reactions to challenging ideas like these and his unwillingness to compromise on sound transit

planning principles. A minor fault is that while Walker takes great care to explicitly lay out the logic behind his conclusions, this results in a few areas of somewhat tedious reading. While Walker attempts to cover a range of operating environments for transit, some portions of the book tend to skew toward service design from an urban standpoint, a bias that may deter readers looking to address services in lower density areas. Nevertheless, the book delivers on its promise to help clarify the conceptual framework for transit service planning and will be an invaluable resource for guiding an increasingly active and passionate public dialogue about the shape of transit’s future. **P2**

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Photo: Nathanel Lowe

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