Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization:
A study of the Fourth and Hill area at Pershing Square station in
downtown Los Angeles

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Abstract
This thesis examines the recent redevelopment activity surrounding the Pershing Square Metro rail station, at Fourth and Hill Streets, in Downtown Los Angeles. The findings show that transit played a role in spurring public sector investment, but has not had a great influence on increasing private sector interest. The private sector perceives the Historic Core’s negative public image and constraints to building rehabilitation as major deterrents to redevelopment in this area.

From this study and the examination of other cases, it is concluded that transit is limited in its ability to spur revitalization. These limitations depend on the characteristics of the transit network, and the presence of policies and physical elements that support transit-oriented development. In addition, deterrents to development that are unique to a community, must be addressed in order to attract private investment.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 5
Figures 9
Chapter 1: Introduction 11
Chapter 2: The Fourth and Hill Vicinity and History 17
Chapter 3: Transit as a Mechanism for Revitalization 27
Chapter 4: Other Mechanisms for Revitalization 45
Chapter 5: The Future of Fourth and Hill 55
Chapter 6: Conclusions 63
Bibliography 71
Interviewees 75
Figures

1.1 Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project
1.2 The Metro Rail network
2.1 The Fourth and Hill Vicinity
2.2 Streetlife near Pershing Square
2.3 Partial plan of downtown Los Angeles
2.4 Pershing Square
2.5 Clark Hotel
2.6 Luby Building
2.7 Subway Terminal Building
2.8 Pacific Electric Hollywood Subway
2.9 Construction of the Belmont Tunnel
2.10 California Plaza III site
2.11 Angels Flight, 1969
2.12 Angels Flight, 1998
2.13 Grand Central Market
2.14 Broadway and Fourth
3.1 Transit-Oriented Development
3.2 The Bay Area Rapid Transit system
3.3 Fruitvale Transit-Oriented Development
3.4 The San Diego Trolley system
3.5 Westlake/MacArthur Park Transit-Oriented Development
3.6 Little Tokyo station
3.7 MTA Benefit Assessment Districts 1 & 2
3.8 Estimated Weekly Boardings by station, Metro Red Line
3.9 Total Monthly Boardings, all Metro Rail lines
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

4.1 Angels Walk brochure
4.2 Angels Walk route
4.3 Hill Street Corridor linkage
4.4 Ten-Minute Diamond
4.5 Grand Central Square brochure
4.6 Subway Terminal Building brochure
Introduction

In Los Angeles, a city known for its unrestricted, automobile-dependent development patterns, the idea of mass transit, much less transit-oriented development, seems like an anomaly. The Metro rail is Los Angeles' latest addition to its public transportation system that attempts to lure residents away from the congested freeways into sleek, new trains. While many critics find the rail system to be inappropriate for its context,1 Metro rail has triggered hopes for revitalizing urban areas that suffer from decay and disinvestment.2 Communities surrounding future Red Line stations eagerly await the day when their stations will open, assuming that revitalization and prosperity will follow — a classic case of the belief that “If you build it, they will come.” Areas around the first segment of the Red Line have shown meager signs of redevelopment. Meanwhile, there has been no success with stimulating redevelopment along the Blue Line, which has been operating since 1990.

This study focuses on the Fourth and Hill Street area, located in the Historic Core of downtown Los Angeles. The Pershing Square Metro rail station has two portals at this intersection and is one of four downtown stations. This is an interesting site for two reasons. First, it has a unique character, which distinguishes it from other parts of Los Angeles, as reflected by its history, physical form, and diverse composition of ethnic groups. It owns several identities — some glamorous, others less desirable.

The Historic Core was the original financial district of the city and still contains a number of Beaux-Arts architectural relics to remind us of its glorious past. A handful
of private developers and historic preservationists continue to celebrate this legacy. In contrast, after being spared by the wrecking ball of urban renewal in the 1960's, the Historic Core was shunned by the corporate elite on Bunker Hill who wanted to use Hill Street as a "moat" to protect their new office district from the poor and minorities down below.³ The image which has continued to plague the area will be captured forever in Jane Jacobs' 1961 description of Pershing Square.

"Possibly America's biggest Skid Row park...is the main downtown park of Los Angeles, Pershing Square...Los Angeles is fortunate that the vacuum of a disintegrated downtown has not been appropriated by predators but has been relatively respectably populated by a flourishing Skid Row."

Less pessimistic, however, is the latest review of the "other" downtown Los Angeles (i.e. not Bunker Hill) in Funkytowns USA. This guide to alternative places credits the Latin American, Asian, and African-American inhabitants...
of the “Third World downtown” for making it a lively and interesting place. Not only is the area pedestrian-friendly, it is one of the few places in Los Angeles that one can experience true urban living.\

The second reason the Fourth and Hill area is an interesting case study is for the challenges it faces as a Metro rail station community. Like others that wish to capture the benefits of this public infrastructure, Fourth and Hill has struggled to improve the relationship between the station and redevelopment opportunities. Nick Patsouras, a Los Angeles MTA Board member and major visionary for a walkable and livable downtown, stated that the first four downtown Metro rail stations are a “disgrace” because they do not relate well to their urban context. The process of planning the stations without consideration for future development was “totally backwards,” according to Patsouras. He believes that a major need for urban design lies ahead, in order to develop visions for the fifty Metro rail stations that are planned over the next thirty years.\(^6\) This lack of connection might discourage people from riding the Metro, and therefore, limit the ability of transit to stimulate redevelopment.

In this study, the terms revitalization, economic development, and redevelopment are used liberally and interchangeably. Here, revitalization is meant to reflect an improved condition of a neighborhood or community. This may include a visual improvement in the condition and care of buildings and open spaces and the infill of previously vacant lots. The local residents and merchants will feel a greater ownership and pride in the area, attracting private investment from external sources. A range of activities will take place at all hours of the day, increasing the sense of safety and security on the streets. Every community has its own goals for revitalization, yet the role that transit can play in stimulating revitalization needs to be explored.

The causal relationship between transit and revitalization is difficult to measure. A variety of factors can influence the impact transit has on revitalization. As shown by studies on BART and the San Diego Trolley, supportive land use policies promote redevelopment, and property values can be affected by characteristics of the
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Figure 1.2 The Metro rail system
Source: Los Angeles MTA.
transit system itself, such as level-of-service. Qualitative elements such as public perception of the area, sense of community, civic pride, or twenty-four hour activity, may improve due to the introduction of transit, but might also be achieved through other mechanisms. Transit is most effective where insufficient accessibility is an obstacle to redevelopment.

There are a variety of reasons, which might explain the recent increase in redevelopment activity at Fourth and Hill. This study began by asking to what degree transit has influenced decisions to invest in the area. While it was discovered that the Metro station has more influence on the public than the private sector, other factors have played a role in increased public investment as well. Interviews of public officials and private developers were conducted to determine the incentives and deterrents to development in the Historic Core.

The conclusions of this study include a summary of the mechanisms that are necessary for Fourth and Hill to understand and improve its relationship to Metro rail. It also recommends that the area be recognized for its strengths and that the city use these attributes to combat the negative public perceptions that inhibit private investment. Finally, there are lessons learned from Fourth and Hill and other case studies, which clarify the limitations that transit has in stimulating revitalization. The Metro rail system is still in its infancy, and perhaps needs twenty years or more before it can make a significant impact on development. The San Diego Trolley and BART precede Metro rail by ten and twenty years, yet still encounter challenges to strengthening the connection between transit and development. This thesis aims to broaden the understanding of ways in which transit can and cannot be utilized as a catalyst for revitalization.
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Footnotes


In the early part of the 20th century, the intersection of Fourth and Hill was in the heart of Los Angeles. This section of downtown enjoyed the qualities of vital urban life that are associated with other major American cities like Boston, New York and Chicago. It was within a stone’s throw from Pershing Square, the “Central Park” of the city, surrounded by the exquisite buildings of the financial district; and was accessible by transit via the famous Pacific Electric Red Car trolleys.

Today Fourth and Hill is still within proximity of those elements, but the environment is rather different than it was in its heyday. Pershing Square, despite redesign and increased security patrol, is a deterrent for most people, even for the transients who used to sleep there. Many historic buildings, which once enjoyed prestige, have either been demolished or are in desperate need of rehabilitation. Their decrepit appearance, high vacancy rates, and the abundance of surface parking lots gives the streets of the historic core a ghost-like, deserted quality. Transit continues to play a major role at Fourth and Hill with bus service, the reconstruction of Angels Flight, and the Metro rail Red Line. However, pedestrian activity pales in comparison to the days when the streetcar was the primary mode of transportation.

Negative perceptions are not unique to this section of downtown. The entire downtown suffers from an image problem, which has earned Los Angeles the reputation of being “a city of suburbs in search of a center.” While there is plenty of activity that occurs downtown, the low resident population and automobile-oriented nature of the city streets.
Figure 2.3: Partial plan of downtown Los Angeles showing the Civic Center, Bunker Hill and the Historic Core.

Source: The Reluctant Metropolis.
pose a challenge to reinvigorating the area with 24-hour activity. Of the 350,000 people employed downtown, few choose to stay past business hours for fear of being alone on the city’s desolate streets. The regional attractions, which draw people from around the county, are disconnected from one another and from other activities. Thus, modifications in current land use, physical design, and transportation are needed throughout downtown, as well as at Fourth and Hill.

While the situation at Fourth and Hill seems bleak, there have been recent improvements made or planned for the area that present hope for the future. The partial plan of the downtown area shows sections of the Civic Center, Bunker Hill and the Historic Core, where Hill Street is the dividing line between the latter two districts (see Figure 2.3). Hill Street is an important corridor because it has the potential to bridge the gap between these two districts that have historically been divided by competing interests and cultural differences.

**Pershing Square, between 5th and 6th, Olive and Hill**

A block south of Fourth and Hill is Pershing Square, which became Los Angeles’ first public space in 1866 when the city set aside a plot of land for public use. Like the Boston Common, it functioned as a cow pasture until it was developed into a park in 1872. It was called Central Park, until 1918 when it was renamed after WWI General John Pershing.

After WWII, downtown continued to decline rapidly as the burgeoning outlying communities and the increased affordability of the automobile propelled the decentralization of Los Angeles. The park was raised in the 1950’s to accommodate a subterranean parking garage, but development on Bunker Hill and the at the Civic Center drew investment to those parts of downtown and away from the historic core. Pershing Square became a haven for homeless persons, and the neighborhood gradually became dominated with night clubs, bars and single-room-occupancy hotels, whose resident population was composed mostly of immigrants and persons of low economic status. The prestigious Regal Biltmore Hotel,
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

located across from Pershing Square on Olive Street, turned its back to the blight by moving its entrance to Grand Avenue.

In preparation for the Olympic Games in 1984, the city spent a million dollars to refurbish Pershing Square. While this face-lift served only temporarily to rid the urban park of its seedy image, it was a turning point that eventually led to the creation of the 1993 Downtown Strategic Plan (DSP).

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and a committee of downtown professionals hired a consultant team to develop the Downtown Strategic Plan, a framework over the following twenty-five years for developing downtown into an attractive, pedestrian-and transit-friendly civic center. The Strategic Plan calls for "catalytic projects" targeted in key areas of downtown that will initiate a chain reaction of development and revitalization. As one of the designated catalysts, Pershing Square serves as one of four public spaces that anchor a planned network of pedestrian-friendly boulevards and paths.

In 1994, the new Pershing Square was unveiled, designed by architect Ricardo Legoretta and landscape architect Laurie Olin. An article in Architectural Review describes the park as "a shock of colour, an eye-catching dynamic mixture of forms, an exhilarating contrast to the glossiness of Bunker Hill and the shabbiness of Broadway." While the bold colors and volumes certainly make a statement, they are not so successful at attracting people to the park. While the café and areas sheltered from the street are more appealing than the original Beaux Arts layout, Pershing Square remains primarily as a decorative cap on the parking garage, and the backyard to the Biltmore.

The Clark Hotel, SE corner 4th and Hill

North of Fifth on Hill Street is the Clark Hotel, which is now undergoing renovation. It opened in 1914 as an upper-class hotel of 341 rooms, and functioned as an SRO until renovation commenced. The Clark Hotel's present owners, Maywah International, plan to reopen it as an establishment that rivals the Biltmore in prestige and...
The Fourth and Hill Vicinity and History

...elegance. They will also rehabilitate and open a trade center for Chinese goods in the smaller building to the south. The hotel and trade center are expected to attract wealthy clientele from Asia.  

**The Luby Building, 4th and Broadway**

Also known as the first Broadway Department Store, the Luby Building was built on Fourth and Broadway in 1914. It was the chain's flagship store until it closed in 1966 and has since remained vacant. As part of a plan to consolidate government offices in the Historic Core, the Luby and a number of other historic buildings on Spring Street are slated for rehabilitation in the near future. The State of California purchased the Luby Building after realizing that the cost to own and renovate the structure would be more economical than new construction. Thirty-plus state agencies will occupy the space when it is complete. It has become a demonstration project for the private sector in the feasibility of building rehabilitation. The decision to rehabilitate the Luby follows construction of the Reagan Building on Spring Street, the first of recent investments in the Historic Core by the public sector. In the future, all government offices are supposed to fall within a ten-minute walking diamond that originates at City Hall.  

**The Subway Terminal Building, SW corner 4th and Hill**

The history of Fourth and Hill is one that has always included some form of transit. Bunker Hill has always presented an obstacle for movement across the city, requiring that transit pass around or through it. The beginning of transit at Fourth and Hill started with the original Spanish pueblo, which was connected to the Pacific Ocean by a road which cut diagonally across what would later be the intersection of Fourth and Hill. Later in 1850, Ord laid out a grid for Los Angeles, creating the Fourth and Hill intersection. This was then followed twenty years later by the city's first public transportation system, the Spring and Sixth Street Horse car Railroad, which traveled a route going west on Fourth and then south on Hill. In the early 1900's, a trolley line traveled down Hill Street, and the Angel's Flight...
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Built in the 1920’s, the Pacific Electric Hollywood line went through a tunnel under Bunker Hill at Fourth and Hill, and was considered as Los Angeles’ first subway. The Pacific Electric Railroad Company spent $5 million dollars to build the Belmont Tunnel, which help reduce travel time to Hollywood from downtown by fifteen minutes. It was the only subway on the west coast until the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) was built in the late sixties. The Subway Terminal Building, which still stands at the southwest corner of Fourth and Hill, was completed in 1925. As the downtown terminus of the Hollywood Line, it was a prestigious office building. At twelve stories, it was proclaimed at that time to be “the highest commercial office structure west of the Mississippi River.” In 1955, the subway was closed for good, as were eventually all the streetcars in Los Angeles. Construction of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in the mid-seventies required that foundation pilings be placed in the middle of the tunnel, breaking it in two. From then on, the tunnel was no longer useable for a subway.

In 1977, the Subway Terminal Building was declared a cultural heritage monument. Most of the twelve floors are currently vacant, but there are future plans for redeveloping it into a mixed-use entertainment megaplex. The ground and basement levels will house a “Dave and Buster’s” theater with virtual/interactive multimedia games. The middle floors will be used for offices and the upper floor for apartments.

California Plaza Phase III, NW corner, 4th and Hill

Across the street from the Subway Terminal Building on the northwest corner of Fourth and Hill is a landscaped area surrounding one of three Metro rail portals. The second portal is located across Hill Street at the corner of a surface parking lot, and the third is at Fifth and Hill across from Pershing Square. The Red Line, which opened in 1992, begins at Union Station, the major rail hub for commuter rail and other passenger trains. The route continues to Civic Center, Pershing Square, then to Seventh Street where it intersects with the Blue Line. The Red Line

funicular took people up to and down from Bunker Hill at Third and Hill."
then leaves downtown, passing through Koreatown and Hollywood.

The remainder of this corner is a steep, grassy slope, which was originally planned as the third phase of the California Plaza complex. The recession prevented the third tower from being built, and today there are landscape plans for a small park to be constructed in order to make better use of the site. Eventually, the owner of the Subway Terminal Building would like to use this corner as part of the entertainment center.

Angels Flight, between 3rd and 4th on Hill

Directly north of the California Plaza site is the Angels Flight, a two-car funicular that carries passengers up and down the side of Bunker Hill. When it was built in 1901, Angels Flight was located on Hill near Third Street. It served the fashionable residential neighborhoods on Bunker Hill, by providing easy access to the shops and services down below. The neighborhoods on Bunker Hill eventually deteriorated, along with the historic core, and were razed during urban renewal. In 1969, ten years after the Bunker Hill urban renewal project was approved, Angels Flight was dismantled.

In 1982, the CRA agreed to the development of California Plaza, stipulating that the restoration of Angels Flight was to be included in the plans. However, when construction on Phase III was delayed indefinitely, the CRA took the initiative to see that Angels Flight was replaced. After numerous fund-raising efforts and contributions by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and CRA, the Angels flight was restored and reopened in 1996. Today the "world's shortest railway" takes passengers for a quick ride between Grand Central Market and California Plaza on Bunker Hill.

Grand Central Market, between 3rd and 4th on Hill

At the foot of Angels Flight is Grand Central Market, an indoor produce and ethnic food bazaar that has been open since 1917. Renovated in 1995, the market is part of a transit-oriented joint-development between the Yellin Company and the MTA. The entire complex, called Grand Central Square, included rehabilitation of the Homer

Figure 2.11 Angels Flight before it was dismantled in 1969. Source: A Guide to the Restoration and Reconstruction of Angels Flight, LA Conservancy

Figure 2.12 Angels Flight today, connecting Hill Street to California Plaza on Bunker Hill. Photo taken by the author.
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Laughlin Building and Million Dollar Building to house a parking structure, offices, and apartments. The Grand Central Market is another designated catalyst in the Downtown Strategic Plan. Because of its historical and cultural significance, it is an attraction that is unique to downtown and one of the few that draws people of different social and economic backgrounds. Because of this, the MTA saw the Grand Central Square project as an important part of stimulating ridership on the adjacent Red Line route. The MTA was responsible for backing construction bonds for the redevelopment of the project. While it is questionable whether or not the Red Line has had an effect on the market's business, or vice versa, it is certain that the Angels Flight restoration has definitely increased travel between Bunker Hill and the historic core, and the market remains a popular spot for shopping and lunchtime crowds.

Figure 2.13 Inside Grand Central Market.
Source: The New York Times

Broadway Theaters

On the other side of Grand Central Market parallel to Hill Street is Broadway, home to a vibrant Latino community and bustling with daytime activity. The old theaters on Broadway are remnants of downtown's heyday when it was the hotspot for nightlife and evening entertainment. Today they are run-down, underutilized, and cannot compete with theaters found elsewhere in the city. The CRA and the local business improvement district have actively explored alternatives for saving these relics from the wrecking ball, but to-date there are no concrete solutions.
The shops and theaters of Broadway cater primarily to a Latin immigrant clientele, but there are other ethnic groups that inhabit the area as well. This ethnic diversity is a strength of the neighborhood, representative of the immigrant foundation on which Los Angeles has grown. Yet, there has been little success attracting of mix of patrons that one finds at Grand Central Market. Middle-class professionals are often reluctant to venture to this part of town, and the area is consistently perceived as a dirty, crime-ridden neighborhood.

Redevelopment activity has surfaced once again around Fourth and Hill, despite its popular image as a blighted, perhaps dangerous area. If one wants a taste of urban life—of density, street life, cafes, employment centers, and transit, all within walking distance of one's home—there are few places in Los Angeles which can offer these amenities. Because downtown was once such a place, it has the density which supports walking, transit, and mixed uses more than other outlying communities of Los Angeles. With this basic infrastructure in place, downtown has the potential to be vital urban setting once again.

The next chapter will address how transit plays a role in the revitalization of the Historic Core. It will also discuss the lessons to be learned from three precedents: the Metro Blue line, the BART in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the San Diego Trolley.
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Footnotes
1 Fogelson, Robert, *The Fragmented Metropolis*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967, p.148. In 1898, the center of town was a few blocks north at Second and Spring Streets, and by 1930 had gradually shifted south to Seventh and Hill.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
15 Interview with Stan Michota, January 7 1998.
18 Ibid.
Transit as a Revitalization Mechanism

Transit is often looked upon as a revitalization mechanism for city centers or neighborhoods that seek to attract economic development. This is based on the premise that transit can consistently bring people to a concentrated area, increasing the likelihood that they will patronize businesses and perhaps live or work in the vicinity. While there are many ways that the influence of transit may be realized, it is difficult to isolate and account for all transit-induced changes. This chapter addresses a deliberate response to transit - the creation of transit-oriented developments (TODs) - which are concerted efforts to reconnect transit with urban form and land use. TODs have become increasingly popular tools for urban revitalization and reshaping suburban development. This chapter also covers examples in San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles that attempt to link transit and development. From these precedents, conclusions are drawn about the potential for transit-oriented development at Fourth and Hill.

Transit's historical influence on development

The expectation that transit can influence urban form and development is well established. The history of cities presents evidence that transportation systems have always been closely associated with urban growth. The four eras associated with transportation technology that influenced growth patterns in cities are (1) the walking and horse car era (1800-1890), (2) the electric streetcar era (1890-1920), (3) the recreational automobile era (1920-1945), and (4) the freeway era (1945-present).1
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

The history of rail has proven that rail transit can play a major role in fostering new development, particularly in Los Angeles. Between the 1880's and 1910, railways played a significant role in encouraging the subdivision of undeveloped land, creating an urban form which would eventually welcome the automobile. The railway entrepreneurs abandoned the risky practice of following growth with transit, as was found in the major eastern cities. Instead, they created new means of funding railroad construction to new territory. This included collecting subsidies from landowners who desired rail access to their property, and securing a share of the increase in land value generated by this amenity. In many cases, railroad companies owned real estate and profited from the sale of land after routes were constructed. This risky, but potentially lucrative business was a competitive industry that would eventually crumble due to economic instability.2

The decline of rail transit was the result of several factors. Some blame the demise of the Los Angeles interurban railways on General Motors and other corporations with automobile interests, also known as the “rubber conspiracy”. More evidence suggests that it was a change in lifestyle, combined with the affordability and popularity of the automobile, and the government subsidy of suburbanization. Policies that favored bus transit also contributed to rail transit’s decline. However, even buses, which replaced rail as the major mode of public transportation, eventually suffered from decreasing ridership as the automobile continued to flourish. After World War II, most transit providers were reorganized into public entities, still unable to rescue the transit industry from its financial troubles.3

As our cities continue to face the threat of uncontrolled sprawl, declining urban centers, and severe congestion, the interest in public transit and its ability to reverse these trends has resurfaced. The evidence of this interest is reflected by scholarly research, by the role of transit in public programs like Welfare-to-Work, and by the increasing attention toward transit-oriented development (TOD). Transit agencies are collaborating with other public agencies and the private sector to create TODs, which are
centered around a transit node, cater to pedestrians, and aim to improve overall quality of life.

**New Urbanism and Transit-Oriented Development**

The concept of transit-oriented development, as promoted by architect Peter Calthorpe and other New Urbanists, provides alternatives to automobile-oriented urban patterns that have been prevalent in city planning since urban renewal and the height of the highway-building era. New Urbanism is a new approach to development that addresses issues of environmental sustainability and community building, while recalling more traditional architectural forms and street patterns. 4

*The Next American Metropolis*, authored by Calthorpe, provides the following definitions of transit-oriented development:

- A Transit-Oriented Development is a mixed-use community within an average 2,000-foot walking distance of a transit stop and core commercial area. TODs mix residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot, or car.
- Urban TODs are located directly on the trunk line transit network: at light rail, heavy rail, or express bus stops. They should be developed with high commercial intensities, job clusters, and moderate to high residential densities. 5

The basic premise of New Urbanism and TODs is that urban form and land uses, when planned correctly, can influence human behavior. What is considered to be a “traditional neighborhood” - one which is more conducive to walking, bicycling and riding transit - is expected to restore the qualities of life, which are frequently absent from typical tract housing subdivisions, large-scale commercial centers, and office parks.

The concept of New Urbanism has been a popular way of rethinking suburban living and has had a great influence in the design for new communities. It has yet to make a similar impact on older and denser urban neighborhoods. It seems that it is easier to implement and construct TODs on large undeveloped sites with a single developer, rather than in existing urban settings. Several plans for urban TODs in California are in the works,
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Figure 3.2 The BART system. Source: http://www.transitinfo.org/BART/
however. These will be smaller in size than the "new town" TODs, but propose to have an urban "village" quality that distinguishes them from automobile-oriented development. If successful, these could serve as demonstration projects for future development.

Two California transit systems, which have had some success with stimulating urban redevelopment, are the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) in the San Francisco Bay Area and the San Diego Trolley. These were constructed in the 1970's and 1980's, respectively, and are still undergoing expansion today. Both regions have TODs, and continue to plan for new ones. One can make comparisons between the experiences in San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles, considering their significantly shorter rail history compared to eastern cities. In other ways, Los Angeles is unique and faces different challenges to incorporating transit into people's lives.

**BART in the San Francisco Bay Area**

The original plan for BART in 1956 stated city center revitalization and control of suburban sprawl as its main goals for constructing the system. Since operations began in 1973, downtown San Francisco has continued to grow with the help of the four stations along Market Street (although the Civic Center area is less successful). Downtown Oakland has also experienced growth that relates to its two BART stations reflected by its new transit-oriented civic center complex.²

In the Bay Area, the "epicenter" of the burgeoning transit village movement, several recent projects have been targeted for inner-city locations as an alternative to typical neighborhood revitalization strategies. One of these is for the Fruitvale station in East Oakland, which is currently surrounded by parking lots and run-down buildings, and set in an older, ethnically diverse neighborhood. In 1991, a local organization, the Spanish-Speaking Unity Council (SSUC), decided that the potential of the transit station to be a catalyst for redevelopment should be utilized. A design charrette, which included the community, five Bay Area design firms, BART officials, and the City of Oakland, produced a scheme that incorporates a variety of activities into a pedestrian-scaled

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Figure 3.3 Rendering of future Fruitvale transit-oriented development.  
Source: Access, Fall 1996.
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Figure 3.4 The San Diego Trolley system. Source: Transit Villages of the 21st Century.
development. This transit village approach differs from other inner-city revitalization strategies in that it supports local entrepreneurship, provides an economical alternative to travel needs, and has the strong support of the transit agency, local government, and community members.

In contrast, BART has had less influence on suburban development. In 1981, the first Bay Area TOD was focused on the suburban Pleasant Hill station, which had failed to stimulate development since it opened in the early seventies. While this made a difference at Pleasant Hill, improvements to station accessibility funded by the public sector far outweigh private investment in most suburban station areas. Suburban TODs have been few because highways provide greater accessibility to suburban areas, neighborhood groups have expressed opposition to multi-family housing at stations, and municipalities along the routes have not been proactive in supporting TODs. For the first decades of the system's operation, BART managers had no interest in encouraging private development in station vicinities, but simply wanted to improve operations. Now, with Fruitvale and other similar projects, BART has become more involved in promoting the link between transit and development.

**The Trolley in San Diego**

The first segment of the San Diego Trolley, completed in 1981 with expediency and low cost, has been the source of "transit envy" for Los Angeles. It was the first light rail project to be built in the United States in over twenty years. Several politicians felt that San Diego had shown the way and pushed for Los Angeles to "take the bull by the horns" in constructing its own rapid transit system. Various proposals for a regional rail system in Los Angeles had been proposed and defeated as early as the 1920's and throughout the 1960's and 1970's. Finally in 1985, the Transportation Commission approved funding for the Blue Line, the first leg of the Metro rail network.

The connection between land use and transportation in San Diego is one of the most visible among American cities, next to Portland, Oregon. With a growth management strategy focused on urban revitalization and infill, the city of San Diego has
experienced increased redevelopment in the downtown and inner city areas since Trolley operation began. Residential growth in the inner city has superseded forecasts by nine times. A number of award-winning joint-development efforts and other highly praised catalytic projects are directly related to Trolley terminals and have been the source of civic pride.\textsuperscript{11}

The city of San Diego was among the first to include transit-oriented development and design guidelines in its growth management policy, and in 1991, Calthorpe was hired to write the TOD Design Guidelines. He also worked on the station area plan for Rio Vista West, a new mixed-use development outside the city center and the first San Diego TOD to follow the new guidelines. Construction of Rio Vista West preceded completion of the Mission Valley Line by approximately four years.\textsuperscript{12}

While the Trolley has contributed to the revival of downtown San Diego, developers in the suburbs are less confident that benefits of rail transit outweigh the costs in outlying areas. Projects, such as Rio West, are often contentious and entail negotiation between developers and the city. Nonetheless, all parties involved seem to agree that San Diego is moving in the right direction to address land use-transportation issues and create more livable communities.\textsuperscript{13}

**Transit Villages in Los Angeles**

In 1993, the TOD concept was adopted into Los Angeles land use policy, and was integrated into the General Plan. The Land Use-Transportation policy prescribes that 75\% of new growth in the city is to be located within one-quarter mile of transit stations (see Chapter 4). Its adoption opened up new opportunities for joint-development and design for prototypes, marking the beginning of the “transit village movement” in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1993, prominent architects and urbanists participated in a design charrette with community groups, using the transit-oriented development concept to produce schemes for future Metro rail and Metro link (commuter rail) stations. The design team responsible for the Vermont/ Santa Monica Red Line station considers the TOD as a
“context modifier,” given its dense, urban setting and potential for influencing neighboring sites. Other schemes were proposed for two Metro link stations, Union Station, and three Red Line stations in Hollywood. The proposals along the Red Line, which would be true urban revitalization efforts, have yet to come to fruition. A few commuter rail stations seemed to have implemented the beginnings of these schemes, and TODs in Long Beach, Pasadena, and downtown (Grand Central Square) have been completed since 1995.

**Future expectations of transit**

These propositions for transit-oriented development in “the land of automobility” appeal to many people. The decision to construct Metro rail in Los Angeles brought hope for communities that view it as a catalyst for redevelopment. This includes neighborhoods, such as Little Tokyo, South Central, Koreatown, and Hollywood.

The anticipation for transit-induced revitalization in Hollywood and Little Tokyo is well publicized. In Hollywood, two Metro rail stations are scheduled to open along Hollywood Boulevard in 1998, with a third to follow in 2000. An increase of redevelopment activity has evolved in anticipation of the neighborhood’s future transit accessibility. These include rehabilitation projects and new developments, which aim to attract the large population of tourists who consistently flock to the area, and hopefully, local residents. The merchants and developers are hopeful that this “second Golden Age of Hollywood” will dispel the seedy reputation that taints the strip’s history as a glamorous, star-studded boulevard.

At the edge of Little Tokyo, construction for a Red Line station will break ground in 1998 and is scheduled to open in 2004. The station is to be sited in what is currently a quiet industrial neighborhood. The station vicinity is home to 1,700 artists’ lofts, a district, which aspires to be “the SoHo of the West.” The MTA was criticized for extending the Red Line in this direction because it makes the route unnecessarily convoluted, serving an area that is not as active as others. One transit planner suggested that it would make more sense to run a shuttle between Little Tokyo and the Civic Center station. However,
residents of Little Tokyo insist on having a station dedicated to the community, convinced that it will serve as a redevelopment catalyst for the area. While there are six years until the Little Tokyo/Arts District station opens, ‘for lease’ signs have appeared all around the area, a sign of the anticipation for its arrival.17

**The Blue Line**

Amongst the excitement and anticipation for areas surrounding future Red Line stations, the Blue Line is a local example that seems to escape the memory of most revitalization enthusiasts in Los Angeles. The Blue Line is the first “experiment” in rail transit induced redevelopment for Los Angeles, but has not served as a model for Red Line expectations. Unlike the neighborhoods surrounding Red Line stations, the areas immediately adjacent to the Blue Line are primarily composed of vacant lots. However, there are lessons that can be learned from the Blue Line experience despite this difference.

The Blue Line connects Long Beach and downtown, through neighborhoods of South Central, which declined during the recession and suffered damage during the Rodney King riots of 1992. It utilizes a rail right-of-way, the same route once traveled by the last streetcar to be dismantled in Los Angeles. This was the first leg of the Metro rail system to be built, completed in 1990, and many expected that it would stimulate growth along its route. However, during the first eight years of operation, the only signs of economic development that have resulted are at the route’s termini in Long Beach and downtown. This is puzzling, if one takes into account the line’s high ridership counts, which have doubled since it first opened.21 It brings us to conclude that even a transit route that is successful at attracting riders may not necessarily attract development. This would require further investigation into where the majority of passengers are beginning and ending their trips, most likely, in this case, at the ends of the line.

Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1996) suggest reasons for the Blue Line’s failure to attract economic development to the inner city. In summary, these are: (1) the location of the transit route away from populated and active centers; (2) the lack of amenities, such as parks
and neighborhood businesses, which make a neighborhood livable and transit stations more attractive; (3) the lack of private investment and sustained public investment through maintenance of streets, litter removal, etc.; (4) the public perception that the area is unsafe due to high crime rates and neglected properties; and (5) the paradox of high property values around South Central stations despite the absence of market demand for these blighted areas. In terms of location, the Pershing Square station is not as isolated from activity as the Blue Line stations. It is within walking distance of various active uses, including employment centers on Bunker Hill and the shops and businesses in the Historic core, many of which are less than a quarter mile of the station. These establishments, along with the dense, pedestrian scale and various public open spaces are amenities that are characteristics of neighborhood livability. In addition, public agencies continue to fund improvements around Fourth and Hill through redevelopment projects, transit investment, and urban design. Both, neighborhood livability and continuous public investment are absent from the Blue Line vicinity.

**Metro Rail and property values**

The hopes expressed by the Little Tokyo and Hollywood neighborhoods are supported by the effect transit has on property values. Fejarang (1992) showed that *announcement* (actualization phase) of the proposed Red Line route caused an increase in property values within a half-mile of stations on Wilshire Boulevard, Vermont Avenue, and Hollywood Boulevard. When construction is complete (operations phase) and the system has had time to influence land use and density (maturation phase), data on ridership, sales revenue, and lease rates can be used to determine affects of transit on property values. The value created by rail transit is captured through benefit assessments, which help to fund rail construction and public improvements. The benefit assessments program is based on the theory that increased pedestrian activity generated by the presence of transit stations will increase opportunities for commerce and real estate development. The study by Landis, et al (1995) on the effect of
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

transit on real estate values and land use changes offers two conclusions. First, it shows that any value created by proximity to transit is not only affected by distance to stations, but also by transit service quality. It examines five systems in California and compares them in hours and frequency of service, average vehicle speed, and average fare. The findings conclude that properties near transit systems that offered a high quality of service benefit the most. This is the case for residential, more often than commercial, properties. The second conclusion is that transit has little influence on land use at or near stations. One explanation is that only a small percentage of the urban population depends on transit. Also, because the public sector is responsible for planning and constructing mass transit, local development policies are often dictated by transit. When private developers were in charge of supplying transportation in the earlier part of the century, transit routes were dictated by the feasibility of development.19

Figure 3.7 The Benefit Assessment Districts, 1 & 2.
Source: How to Calculate Benefit Assessments, MTA.
Lessons for Fourth and Hill

Despite several successful stories, there is no indication that the presence of transit guarantees urban revitalization. San Francisco/Oakland and San Diego experienced growth in their downtowns, but also continue to face challenges. The Blue Line was thought to be a solution to inducing redevelopment, but it has only done so in limited station areas. This implies that transit is not an exclusive solution for revitalization. At a time when most persons are not dependent on transit, proximity to transit is not always sufficient to stimulate development in a neighborhood. Michael Bernick, a former member of the BART Board of Directors, states that transit alone cannot ensure private sector investment, but that it can "encourage private-sector efforts and increase the potential for new urban growth."

Some transit stations have been "magnets" for transit-oriented development proposals, conveying the message, "If you build it, they will come." As demonstrated by the action taken by the Fruitvale community, a "response" to the Fruitvale BART station on the part of the community, public sector and private investors is necessary to initiate the relationship between transit and development. The appearance of transit-oriented developments in the Bay Area, San Diego, and Los Angeles is evidence that the link between transit and a community needs to be promoted and nurtured. However, other sites, such as those along the Blue Line, have been left out of the limelight, possibly for some of the reasons cited by Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee. Reluctance toward TODs in the suburbs of the Bay Area and San Diego demonstrates that there are limitations from that end of the development spectrum as well. The need for transit-oriented development, and the failure of development to occur independently, is perhaps an indication that transit often requires external efforts, such as policy and urban design, to stimulate revitalization.

The examples also show that there are locational advantages offered by transit, which can improve redevelopment potential. Whether this entails planning transit routes that are development-oriented, as in downtown San Francisco, or locating development at a route terminus,
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

### Figure 3.8 Metro Red Line, Estimated Average Weekday Boardings by Station. Boarding/Alighting Check Performed on Nov. 6, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Eastbound</th>
<th></th>
<th>Westbound</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ons</td>
<td>Offs</td>
<td>Ons</td>
<td>Offs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Station</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,670</td>
<td>7,472</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Center</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>1,773</td>
<td>1,781</td>
<td>883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pershing Square</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>2,181</td>
<td>2,075</td>
<td>1,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Center</td>
<td>4,194</td>
<td>3,779</td>
<td>3,107</td>
<td>4,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westlake/Alvarado</td>
<td>1,773</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>1,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>2,209</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>1,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normandie</td>
<td>1,579</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>1,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>4,638</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,550</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,550</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,550</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in the Blue line case, both have greater chances of success. The average weekday boardings on the Red Line are highest at the termini and at Seventh Street/Metro Center, where it connects with the Blue Line (see Table 3.1). The disadvantage of being located at an intermediary station without destinations to draw passengers is clear at Fourth and Hill and along the Blue Line. However, this is a short-term disadvantage, and may be resolved once the transit system is mature and operating smoothly. The monthly boardings for all three lines have gradually increased since their openings (see Figure 3.6). It follows that the transit system will be attractive to more users as future routes are constructed and more destinations are served.

Fourth and Hill can probably learn more from the Blue Line experience than from BART or San Diego Trolley. For one, both transit stations are part of the same network and are affected by the shortcomings of the Metro rail system. As mentioned previously, the level-of-service and the maturity of the network can affect ridership and property values. Second, although South Central and the Historic Core have different pasts and physical appearances, they share commonalities in deterrents to redevelopment. Negative public perceptions plague both
areas. Neighborhood businesses and public spaces are either non-existent or unable to attract a great number of people. Both areas have been slow to recover from the recession.

One positive aspect which points favorably at the future of TOD at Fourth and Hill is that Grand Central Square is a source of increased pedestrian activity, especially now that all 121 apartments have been filled. A joint project between the Yellin Company and the MTA/CRA, the Grand Central Square has been touted as a spark of revitalization for the Historic Core and as an opportunity to boost ridership on the Red Line. While the symbiosis between Pershing Square station and Grand Central are yet to be realized, the relationship between Angels Flight and Grand Central is well established. The ease with which people can now climb and descend Bunker Hill has increased the flow of foot traffic to the market and other destinations in the Historic Core.

Another factor, which favors transit-oriented development in the Historic Core, is its density and scale. Present-day Fourth and Hill, doted with surface parking lots, is capable of absorbing infill projects of varying sizes. Whether they are labeled as transit-oriented or not, they will have access to transit and embody the qualities associated with this type of development.
From the examples presented in this chapter, transit is shown to be successful at generating enthusiasm for redevelopment opportunities. From the expectation that BART would revitalize declining urban centers, to the anticipation for Metro rail to revive Hollywood Boulevard, major transit investments continue to inspire visions and plans for urban redevelopment. The realization of these visions is less commonplace, however. The employment of other mechanisms, sometimes independent of transit, is often necessary to stimulate revitalization. The various strategies used at Fourth and Hill are presented in the following chapter.
Footnotes

5 Ibid, p.56-57.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
20 Loukatiou-Sideris, Anastasia and Tridib Banerjee, "There's No There There or Why Neighborhoods Don't Readily Develop Near Light-Rail Stations," Access, No. 9, Fall 1996, p.5.
22 Loukatiou-Sideris, Anastasia and Tridib Banerjee, "There's No There There or Why Neighborhoods Don't Readily Develop Near Light-Rail Stations," Access, No. 9, Fall 1996, p.5.
23 Transit investments refer to Hill Street Corridor improvements which will involve restriping Hill Street for two-way traffic and dedicated bus lanes.
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

26 Interview with Anne Mueller, January 7 1998.
Other Mechanisms for Revitalization

The previous chapter described how transit is expected to induce revitalization due to its historical relationship to development and due to several impressive success stories. As seen in the Fruitvale BART and Metro Blue Line examples, adjacency to transit is not necessarily enough to spur redevelopment. This realization inspired the Fruitvale community to produce plans for a transit-oriented development, a strategy which is becoming a popular means of influencing development in urban as well as suburban settings. Other mechanisms that are being used to stimulate revitalization range from broad policies linking transportation and land use to site specific plans to improve public spaces and streets. Some of these approaches enhance transit accessibility, while others are independent of transit. This chapter looks into the various approaches that apply to the Fourth and Hill area.

Policy

The Land Use-Transportation policy, adopted by the Los Angeles City Council in 1993, is an important part of setting the framework for future development. It prescribes that 75% of future growth is to be located within a quarter-mile of transit stations. The guiding principles of the Land Use-Transportation policy reflect the desire to relate a mix of uses with transit accessibility, while respecting community character and issues of equity. They read as follows:
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

- To increase ridership and maximize the use and efficiency of Los Angeles' rail and bus transit systems.
- To distribute housing, employment and public transit opportunities equitably for all social and economic groups.
- To establish transit centers and station areas as places where future growth of Los Angeles is focused.
- To develop and apply urban design standards to ensure the development of a high-quality and safe and secure urban environment.
- To provide open space and recreational space around transit station areas.
- To develop compact quality pedestrian-oriented mixed-use neighborhoods within walking distance to rail transit stations and other transit centers.
- To reflect the unique cultural and physical identity of each community.
- To promote private sector development in rail and other transit centers to maximize public investment.

The Fourth and Hill area has the basic infrastructure in place to adopt these principles. As will be discussed in this chapter, some of the policy's prescriptions, such as the use of urban design to improve public space, are already underway. Though it may be difficult to enforce others, like the preservation of the community's cultural identity, or the equitable distribution of employment and housing, having these criteria as part of policy will hopefully promote actions which support these goals.

One of the conclusions from the Landis (1995) study is that supportive policies can aid transit in influencing land-use and property values. While this is not a prescription for transit-induced revitalization in inner cities, it emphasizes the point that transit alone is inadequate for effecting change. Landis speculates that the results from his analysis of BART and the San Diego Trolley may have been more favorable if incentives were in place to promote transit-oriented development and to prevent desirable uses from "leaking out" to suburban areas. In a few of the BART station areas, the local community was not supportive of higher densities at stations and aimed to prevent them. San Francisco's Downtown Plan, on the other hand, prescribes the location of higher-density commercial development in transit.
Strategic Planning

For decades, the downtown Los Angeles area has been struggling to attract residents and businesses, which were being lost to the outlying communities. In lieu of the Bunker Hill approach to redevelopment, a twenty-five year Downtown Strategic Plan was approved in 1993 to take a more incremental approach to planning and revitalization. Architects and urbanists Moule & Polyzoides worked with a team of consultants and the Downtown Citizen's Advisory Committee to come up with a plan to frame the future development of downtown. The plan names certain catalytic projects and corridors to which redevelopment efforts should be channeled. There is an emphasis on civic spaces, returning the "publicness" back to the streets, and also, respect for the different districts and cultural centers found downtown. By funneling investments into targeted catalysts, the challenge of impacting such a large area as downtown is less overwhelming and allocates resources more efficiently.  

Dan Rosenfeld, Asset Manager for the City of Los Angeles, cited the DSP as a primary reason for the state's and city's investment in the Historic Core. Compliance with the Plan was an instrumental part of justifying the reuse of older buildings in the Historic Core. By consolidating government offices in this area, the public sector benefits economically, supports historic preservation, and transit use, while helping to restore civic pride in downtown.  

Heritage Planning

Angels Walk is a pedestrian linkage project which links the five historic districts of downtown: Bunker Hill/Historic Core, Music/Civic Center, Chinatown, El Pueblo/Union Station, and the Little Tokyo/Arts District. Funded by the MTA, this project proposes streetscape improvement and signage to demarcate pedestrian routes and transit linkages to places of historical and civic interest. By

Figure 4.1 The Angels Walk brochure.  
Source: Angels Walk/MTA
Encouraging people to walk and use transit, Angels Walk attempts to increase street life, influence economic development, and move toward the transformation of downtown into a twenty-four-hour metropolis. The first Angels Walk brochure, published in January 1998, is a guide...
to the landmarks and attractions in the Bunker Hill/Historic Core District. The treatment of the two districts as one is an important step in reshaping attitudes about areas that have long been divided by cultural and class differences.5

**Urban Design/Pedestrian Linkage**

The Hill Street Corridor redevelopment project is the first step in realizing the streetscape improvements as suggested by the Angels Walk proposal. Hill Street is the spine which connects the Music/Civic Center to the Bunker Hill/Historic Core. It is also a major thoroughfare for buses and has two Metrorail stations, Civic Center and Pershing Square. Urban design schemes seek to improve the relationship between stations and their surroundings, while connecting them to the destinations that are situated along and adjacent to Hill Street. This demonstration project,
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

funded by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and MTA, will hopefully improve the appearance and image of the Historic Core, and encourage pedestrian and transit activity along Hill Street.6

The “Ten-Minute Diamond” is another plan to encourage pedestrian activity, while strengthening the identity of the Civic Center. This plan requires that state, county and local government offices be located within a ten-minute walk from City Hall, as an effort to consolidate facilities and make use of existing buildings in downtown. This ten-minute diamond crosses the boundary between the Civic Center and Historic Core, encompassing many of the historic structures of the original financial district. Approximately 4,000 employees will be relocated to the area, creating a critical mass of activity.7

Figure 4.4 The Ten-Minute Diamond.
Source: A.C. Martin
Other Mechanisms for Revitalization

Adaptive Re-use

Another strategy for revitalizing the historic core has been to find new uses for the buildings that are currently vacant and in need of rehabilitation. Because so many buildings in the Historic Core fit this description, they are ideal locations for large companies or organizations which require a large amount of floor space. The State of California is consolidating seventy office leases into the Luby Building at Fourth and Broadway as the first step in the government office consolidation plan. This strategic move was initially made for economical reasons, but has expanded to become a demonstration project in rehabilitation and tool for revitalization.

Many vacant buildings are also ideal for conversion into live-work lofts, a trend that has been popular in other cities. According to marketing studies, there is a demand for 4,500 apartment units in downtown. The city may consider new zoning and building codes to encourage this type of conversion. The Subway Terminal at Fourth and Hill is viewed as having great potential for this type of new use. Its owner, Duane Cameron, President of Systems Development, envisions the ground and basement levels as an entertainment complex with offices and market-rate apartments in the upper floors.

The notion of creating Spring Street into a high-tech corridor has also been proposed in light of the fact that basic fiber-optic cables were installed when the street was rebuilt several years ago. Developers are already beginning to look at the Pacific Grand Hotel at Fourth and Spring as a possible start. Plans call for 200 apartments with high-speed internet connection, and a café and restaurant on the ground floor. In addition, Glendale Community College is considering plans to set-up a multimedia training center on one floor of the Pacific Grand.

Business Improvement District

In the private sector, some business/property owners in the Historic Core have collaborated to form a business improvement district (BID). This stemmed from the "Miracle on Broadway" effort which involved organizing events at the underutilized and run-down historic theaters on Broadway. These theaters, unable to compete with other
venues in Los Angeles and Hollywood are in dire need of repair and rehabilitation. Historic preservationists fear that without new uses, these structures will gradually be lost to demolition. The BID self-imposes a tax which is used to fund street improvements, maintenance, and security. There has been some controversy because some of the business owners cannot afford the $400 annual fee. Some merchants believe that the city should be responsible for footing the bill.\textsuperscript{14}

**Marketing**

The negative public perception of the Historic Core is a major deterrent to private investment. Strategies for broadening public awareness, such as Angels Walk and the LA Conservancy Walking Tours, should be promoted to dispel myths about the area. Several beautiful brochures have been produced to market the Grand Central Square and Subway Terminal Building. However, neither of these shows images of the street or neighborhood. Instead they focus on historical elements and architectural features. If the city and the neighborhood were to market the area as an ethnic bazaar, the Historic Core could be a unique destination that distinguishes itself from others in Los Angeles. It could be recognized as the best place to find an international cornucopia of businesses, cuisine, and entertainment.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.5}
\caption{Grand Central Square brochure.}
\label{figure4.5}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: The Yellin Company}
The mechanisms employed at Fourth and Hill and in the Historic Core include transit-related and non-transit related strategies for stimulating activity and redevelopment. As transit is not a single solution to encouraging revitalization, neither are the various mechanisms discussed in this chapter. A collective effort that includes different methods can be more effective in spurring redevelopment and pedestrian activity. This might be achieved through public and private partnerships or demonstration projects between local groups and public agencies.

Furthermore, each community will have unique issues, which need to be addressed with appropriate strategies. We have seen that in this day and age, transit does not play an essential role in many lives as it once did, and cannot reverse many of the deterrents that inhibit the private sector from investing in a neighborhood. Persons of more modest means remain transit-dependent, however, and can benefit from living and working near transit. Because the Fourth and Hill area is transit-accessible, it can accommodate a diversity of people and needs. It has many other opportunities, which point toward a revival of interest in its future. The next chapter addresses the future of Fourth and Hill and the challenges and possibilities that lie ahead.

Figure 4.6 Subway Terminal Building brochure.  
Source: Systems Development
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

Footnotes

1 City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Land Use/Transportation Policy, 1993.
4 Interview with Dan Rosenfeld, January 8 1998.
12 Interview with Duane Cameron, January 6 1998.
The Future of Fourth and Hill

The future of Fourth and Hill depends on a variety of factors, including the completion of projects currently in progress, and the implementation of other efforts mentioned in Chapters Three and Four. While it is difficult to predict whether or not these mechanisms will be effective, it can be stated that the future of Fourth and Hill does not rest on any single factor. Rather, a combination of things must take place for there to be a significant improvement of the image and development at Fourth and Hill. This chapter outlines the critical elements necessary for revitalization and suggests additional strategies. It also summarizes the public and private sectors' outlook for Fourth and Hill.

Transit

Smaller transit investments like the Angels Flight and the DASH shuttles have improved downtown circulation immensely and appear to have done more than Metro rail to increase pedestrian activity downtown. Angels Flight has remade the connection between Bunker Hill and the Historic Core that has been absent for decades. It is the first of many links which needs to be established between the two districts. It seems that the Metro rail is definitely an amenity for Fourth and Hill and sometimes a prominent factor in development decisions. However, the system itself needs to deliver a reliable and convenient service for transit to make a significant impact in the future. The system is currently not sufficient or dependable enough for most travel needs. It also does not service popular destinations, like
the airport, the beach, or entertainment venues, which might encourage people to ride the subway. Ideally, Metro rail should help to forge a symbiotic relationship between destinations in the downtown and outlying areas.

**Commitment from the public sector**

The Historic Core and Fourth and Hill are recipients of a considerable amount of public investment compared to other areas of downtown. The government office consolidation is a long-term commitment to the old financial district and signifies the value that the public sector finds in reusing the resources available downtown. Projects like the Luby restoration can serve as demonstration projects for the private sector on how to complete a rehabilitation in the Historic Core. They will also create a critical mass of inhabitants, which could possibly have multiplier effects in terms of attracting services and restaurants to the vicinity. Streetscape improvements and attention to other public spaces will improve the appearance and overall feeling toward the area, while fostering civic pride. Ensuring that downtown is a nice place to walk with a variety of transportation mode choices will improve accessibility to jobs, services, and residences downtown. Public commitment is an important part of regaining the confidence of the general public in the Historic Core.

**Policy**

The Downtown Strategic Plan is a long-range plan that is effectively working to set a framework for downtown development. The fact that the public sector respects and bases decisions upon DSP agendas is beneficial to downtown and to Fourth and Hill. Fourth and Hill is directly impacted by two of the catalytic projects designated by the DSP (Pershing Square and Grand Central Market). Although immediate effects of these catalysts have not been fully realized, it is possible that over time spin-off projects will result from these initial efforts. In addition, the decision to focus 75% of new development in LA around transit was a critical decision in directing future growth within proximity to transit. Policies such as this are vital in making places like Fourth and Hill valuable for their transit access. In a broader sense, it gives people more choices about the kind
of lifestyles they wish to lead, such as the kinds of modes by which they travel, or the density/"walkability" of the neighborhoods in which they wish to live.

**Cooperative regulation**

One of the main challenges to development in the Historic Core is meeting building codes. Many of the spaces in historic buildings that are being considered for alternative uses needed to be upgraded to meet standards for their new use. For example, space that was originally built as office space must meet ADA, fire, and seismic codes to be converted to residential or live-work lofts. Members of the development community often regard these as costly and arduous barriers to renovation projects. While public safety should not be compromised, perhaps reworking the codes to encourage rehabilitation is essential to making this kind of work more attractive to the private sector. Also necessary are zoning ordinances to encourage mixed-uses, such as permitting residential above commercial/retail space, similar to Grand Central Square. Increasing the residential uses downtown are crucial for encouraging street life beyond the eight-to-five time frame and for transforming downtown into a twenty-four hour metropolis.

**Public relations**

Although public relations can involve a lot of marketing and place-selling, the first and most important thing to convey is safety. The best way to achieve this is through physical improvements, regular cleaning and maintenance, and security service. Marketing will be crucial for Fourth and Hill because there are such strong psychological barriers, which prevent people from coming to the Historic Core. A highly effective marketing strategy is word of mouth, therefore, it will take some time to regain the confidence of a broader audience. Hopefully, the general public will become reacquainted with the Historic Core once more people begin to live, work and shop there.

Angels Walk is an attempt to inform the public of the various landmarks of the Bunker Hill/Historic Core district, delineating a path for people to follow on a self-guided tour (see Chapter 4). The Subway Terminal Building has been transit-oriented since it was built at the entrance
of Los Angeles' first subway line and named after this distinguished location. In this light, Fourth and Hill was home to transit-oriented development long before New Urbanism would promote it, and could be the starting point for a "Los Angeles Transit Village" tour. Regardless of the manner in which it is presented, the rich history of transit at Fourth and Hill can be another layer of information to add to the educational experience of the Historic Core.

**Regional attractions**

The various new attractions planned for other areas of downtown offer another opportunity for the public to become reacquainted with the Historic Core. These include the new Sports Arena, the Disney Concert Hall, and the new cathedral for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which have drawn a lot of media attention to downtown in recent years. The success of these investments in revitalizing downtown hinges on several factors. These include marketing efforts and public relations, programming of events/tours between institutions, and transportation that encourages visits to multiple locations, rather than the "one-stop-shopping" that tends to characterize visits to downtown. This coordination and connection between destinations is critical. Without it, visitors to downtown will continue to make single-use trips that have been the result of former failures by high-profile projects to catalyze revitalization.

**Financial incentives**

Financial incentives can include mechanisms other than subsidies and expensive investments funded by the public sector. While tax incentives are enticing, public agencies do not have the resources to make a large impact using this method. One strategy for encouraging private sector investment in residential uses is the location-efficient mortgage (LEM). The LEM allows a homeowner to qualify for more loans if he/she is committed to using transit. This is based on the premise that using transit costs substantially less than owning and maintaining an automobile, allowing the borrower to redirect this savings toward a mortgage. This concept will assist persons of low and moderate incomes to achieve homeownership, as well as promote the use of transit. The LEM is currently being tested in
Chicago, and is also expected to be tested in parts of Los Angeles and San Francisco in the future.  

**Commitment from the private sector**

Having recovered from a bad economy, Los Angeles seems to be undergoing a Renaissance of appreciation for city life and public space. Along with a renewed interest in downtown, an interest in the Historic Core by the private sector is beginning to take shape. There are people in the private sector - architects, business owners, property owners/developers and others - who are very dedicated and eager to see the Historic Core make its comeback. They are encouraged by many of the positive signs that indicate a brighter future for Fourth and Hill. Developers like the Yellin Company (Grand Central Square), who have been committed to the Historic Core for over a decade, serve as examples for other downtown developers that are curious to see how one would tackle a project in an area that has potential, but many difficulties. The attitude of some is that if Ira (Yellin) cannot do it, no one can. In order to gain the confidence of the private sector, demonstration projects are crucial, whether they are joint developments with public agencies or between private entities.

**Public sector expectations for Fourth and Hill**

In general, the public sector is more optimistic about the future of Fourth and Hill than the private sector. This is not surprising given the fact that a great deal of public money has been justified and spent on the Historic Core. Also, because the public sector is responsible for transit planning and locating the station at this site, it follows that if would be more responsive to transit's existence there. Perhaps it is also out of faith that transit, urban design, and public investment in redevelopment will demonstrate how downtown can be an inviting place to be.

One can conclude that all the various public investments that have been made are important to the future of Fourth and Hill. To increase the likelihood that private sector interest will grow, the public sector should continue its commitment to the Historic Core and help to market the area for its uniqueness. When the government offices are
relocated here, the public sector will have permanent ties to the area. In terms of marketing, it is important for the public sector to convey the unique strengths of the Historic Core to retain the positive aspects of its identity.

**Private sector expectations for Fourth and Hill**

With the exception of a few developers who are very passionate about the Historic Core, the private sector is a little more skeptical. It feels that there is potential for the area, but that the obstacles to development are significant. A private developer from the Bunker Hill area stated that ten years ago, Fourth and Hill was a high-profile and attractive area because of the third phase of California Plaza. The CRA released a request for proposal (RFP) for Cal Plaza III which involved a substantial budget, an indication of an availability of public funds which does not exist today. Now the site is a vacant grassy slope which does nothing to help the weak connection between Bunker Hill and the Historic Core. The lack of attractive destinations and activities, the complicated rehabilitation process, and the negative public perceptions of the Historic Core are real deterrents that make developers skeptical about investing there.

The image of the Historic Core has a lot to do with the people who live and work there. The people who are there now – the immigrants, the minorities, and people who are marginalized from mainstream society – are as much a part of the Historic Core as the fine buildings that are reminiscent of a glorious past. The diversity of the Historic Core is likewise representative of the richness of Los Angeles. While the area is lacking a mixture of inhabitants across different economic and social classes, the gradual displacement of the current population would be a mistake.

Both the public and private sectors have crucial roles in impacting the future of Fourth and Hill. To reverse negative public perceptions, the public sector will need to supply its continued support and commitment to the area, in terms of developing the relationship with the Civic Center. Another important piece of public sector commitment is marketing the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Historic district as a unique strength and asset to the area. Emphasizing, for example, the abundance of Hispanic and
other ethnic cuisines in marketing efforts would assert the value of the ethnic characteristic of the neighborhood to the city. It would send a message to the private sector that the success of the area depends on retaining the diverse nature of the people and businesses in the Historic Core. Following this, the private sector must have a civic commitment to maintaining this diversity, while giving the Historic Core a competitive advantage in a world of sameness. If Fourth and Hill were only to have attractions that are easily found in other parts of the city, it will be difficult to attract people. Uniqueness of place is an essential piece of the revitalization of this area. Perhaps one of the most unique qualities of Fourth and Hill is its accessibility to the subway system.

Would revitalization at Fourth and Hill be possible without the presence of transit? While the presence of transit has not totally convinced the private sector to invest, it has played a major role in attracting public sector investment. Because commitment to the area by the public sector has the ability to encourage private investment, I would argue that transit was and is a necessary component in attracting redevelopment activity to Fourth and Hill. There is a symbiotic relationship between the revitalization of Fourth and Hill and transit. This is not restricted to the Metro rail, but includes buses, walking, and the Angels Flight. If the Historic Core becomes a real destination, the Metro rail may benefit from it. When the transit network is more “mature,” the attraction to the Historic Core will increase. Only then will there exist a balance of transit-oriented development and development-oriented transit.
Footnotes

1 Interview with Frances Banerjee, January 7 1998.
   Also visit http://www.cnt.org/lem/home.htm
3 This is evident by the successes of the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica and Old Town Pasadena, which are successfully revitalized, pedestrian-oriented environments.
4 Interview with John Vaillance, January 7 1998.
Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the major conclusions of this study on the redevelopment activity at Fourth and Hill. It addresses the potential for redevelopment, and the elements which will foster private sector interest in the area. It also assesses the capacity in which transit can be effective as a tool for revitalization. The conclusions from the Fourth and Hill case study and about transit as a revitalization mechanism are followed by suggestions for the approach communities should take in regard to strengthening the relationship between development and transit.

Transit has played a role in encouraging public sector investment at Fourth and Hill. Transit has not been the only driving force behind implementing proposed improvements, but is considered an important factor in selling ideas to other government agencies and the public. The public sector has responded to the presence of transit over the last several years by investing in projects that relate to the Pershing Square station, such as the redesign of public spaces like Pershing Square and the Hill Street Corridor, which enhance the pedestrian and transit experience. They also include redevelopment efforts, such as the rehabilitation of the Luby Building and similar plans for more government offices, which were able to gain additional support due to proximity to the Red line. In addition, the redevelopment of the Grand Central Square, a joint public-private venture, is a transit-oriented development which also values proximity to the Red line.
Transit as a catalyst for urban revitalization

and to Angels Flight.

In concert with the Downtown Strategic Plan, these public projects represent a collective effort to improve physical and psychological connections between the Historic Core and Bunker Hill. The DSP plays a large role in influencing the public sector’s commitment to the Historic Core and to transit. The strong symbiotic relationship that has developed between the Angels Flight funicular and Grand Central Square demonstrates how transit and public sector intervention can begin to link the two districts, by stimulating pedestrian activity and economic development.

This concentration of public investment has already begun to broaden awareness about the Historic Core. While transit, civic commitment, and the DSP have influenced this investment, it will be the success of the aforementioned projects that ultimately help to attract private investment to the area.

The private sector views transit as an amenity, but not as a primary reason to invest in the Historic Core. There are two explanations for why transit is not as marketable to the private sector. (1) Before the Metro station opened at Fourth and Hill, access to the Historic Core via bus or automobile served the area well. Access to Metro rail does not address the prevalent issues, which have deterred private development up until now. (2) The full potential of the transit system is not evident. It will take approximately twenty years to complete the entire Metro rail network, and until then, locating near the Red line provides little benefit to businesses and residents at Fourth and Hill. In addition, the Metro rail has done little to increase foot traffic and trips to the area. The potential long-term benefits of a completed network are recognized by many, but few private investors are willing to commit the time and money necessary to capture those benefits.

The revitalization of Fourth and Hill will take time to come to fruition. The major deterrents to private sector development in the Historic Core are the district’s negative public image and policy challenges to building rehabilitation. Public sector commitment to the Historic Core through demonstration projects, improvements to public
space, and marketing, is a significant part of regaining the private sector's confidence. While some of these improvements may be implemented in less than a year, it may take several years before the area is perceived as a safe place to walk, to conduct business, and to live. If Metro rail is to play an active role in renewing street life, it may take ten years or more before the transit network is substantial enough to continuously bring pedestrians to the Historic Core throughout the day. These various elements are all long-term investments, which will require persistence and patience before the benefits are fully realized.

The qualities of the Historic Core which make it unique are its greatest assets. The historic buildings are not the only distinctive element of the Historic Core. The community is one of immigrants and minorities who represent the incredibly diverse mix of people who live in Los Angeles. While the predominance of inhabitants from low economic status have driven away private and public investment in the past, maintenance of the ethnic character of the Historic Core will distinguish it from other trendy destinations. For the area to revitalize, people with more financial resources will need to come to live and work in the neighborhood, and upwardly mobile residents must have to desire to stay and invest in the community. It is in the best interest of the Historic Core to accommodate different classes and cultures, through provision of a variety of housing options and types of businesses. Achieving this "social balance" is a delicate one to maintain, but can be a valuable asset to the success of this area.

Local examples have not changed the perception of transit as a catalyst for revitalization. Despite the failure of the Blue line to spur economic development in South Central, several communities in Los Angeles are convinced that having a Metro station in the future will be the driving force behind revitalization. This misconception is often driven by successful examples of revitalization where the introduction of a new transit system coincided or was followed by periods of positive growth. Precedents in California, such as the San Diego Trolley and BART, have contributed to revitalizing downtown areas
and often fuel enthusiasm for the opportunities that transit might bring.

From observing the situation at Fourth and Hill and along the Blue line, it appears that more enthusiasm for revitalization was driven by the anticipation for Metro rail rather than by its presence. Once the stations opened and the system was operating for several years, the limits of transit's ability to spur redevelopment became apparent. Likewise, other communities that are eager to reap the benefits of having a Metro rail station may realize that other variables can affect the outcome as much or more than transit.

The influence of transit on redevelopment depends on the demand for accessibility to and from the area. Without a strong demand for increased accessibility, transit will have little or no influence on revitalization. Since the Fourth and Hill area is well-served by automobile and bus access, the addition of rail service probably has little impact on people's decisions to come to the Historic Core. Along the Blue line route in South Central, one reason redevelopment has not occurred is because accessibility to downtown and Long Beach does not resolve the main deterrents to development in that neighborhood. Rather, the transit service caters mainly to those who work downtown or in Long Beach. The demand to get to South Central by people outside the community is probably not sufficient to create development interest at the stations either.

The transit system must serve the destinations to which people want to go. A transit system that does meets transportation needs is similarly ineffective in influencing redevelopment. The Metro rail network, still in its infancy, is limited in scope and convenience. It has often been criticized because it does not service major destinations, such as the airport, or local universities. The lack of incentives to use the transit system curbs the extent to which transit can bring people to an area, and ultimately, its ability to induce revitalization. While there may be a demand for transit in the South Central community, the Blue line does not meet travel needs beyond the extents of the
Metro system. This is another possible explanation for why Blue line stations have not become hubs for activity.

In contrast, many commuters from Long Beach find the service between Long Beach and downtown attractive, reflected by ridership counts, which have exceeded forecasts. The area surrounding the Seventh Street station, the downtown terminus of the Blue line, appears to benefit from the increased foot traffic. Signs of recovery from the recession have begun to show with the development of new retail establishments in the vicinity. This demonstrates that the high demand to travel between the two areas, met by appropriate transit service, can generate opportunities for economic development.

The quality of transit service can affect the ability of transit to influence redevelopment. As previously mentioned, the extent or “maturity” of the Metro rail network effects quality of service. Other characteristics of transit, such as level-of-service (LOS) and the type of technology used, can influence the quality of transit as well. These factors are relevant to redevelopment potential because a system, which is not attractive, will not be successful in bringing people to an area. As the Landis (1995) study showed, greater LOS had a positive effect on property values surrounding BART stations, which supports the notion that quality of service is valuable to surrounding development and the people who use transit.

Because LOS will differ between transportation technologies, investing in a greater number of less expensive and smaller transit vehicles is sometimes preferred, due to greater frequency of service. The proposal to complete the Metro rail network with an advanced bus system, similar to the one in Curitiba, Brazil, could potentially have a positive influence on development near those stations. Of course, other factors in planning and development will also affect the impact that the alternative system may have on communities.

Transit has local immediate impacts, but is weaker in reshaping regional development. The initial hope that BART would redirect sprawling development was never realized. Similarly, Metro rail is unlikely to change
Transit cannot single handedly induce revitalization or economic development. Each community has its unique problems and deterrents to redevelopment. In the case of Fourth and Hill and the Blue line, there are several major deterrents to development which are not resolved by the provision of rail transit. At Fourth and Hill, negative public perceptions and challenges to building rehabilitation in the Historic Core are the primary barriers to redevelopment. Similarly, in South Central Los Angeles, negative perceptions prevent development from occurring along the Blue line, in addition to factors such as planning, lack of public investment, and inflated property values. None of these deterrents can be resolved through improved accessibility. The public sector, aware that Fourth and Hill needs to be improved in various ways, has invested in urban design, rehabilitation, and pedestrian linkage projects as well.

Transit must follow development so that more development will follow transit. While this suggestion is somewhat of a “Catch-22,” the increasing need for transit-oriented development is, in part, a result of planning transit routes and stations that do not serve destinations. This is especially the case in Los Angeles, where an unattractive transit system that goes “nowhere” must depend on transit-oriented developments to boost its ridership. This is not to suggest that TODs are undesirable. However, the heavy reliance on development to follow poor planning decisions, in order to make the transit system work, is unreasonable. The idea that transit should be development-oriented, has been lost with the public ownership of transit agencies, who are not as vulnerable to market demands or responsive to travel needs.
This thesis began by asking to what extent transit served as a catalyst for revitalization at Fourth and Hill. From the research, it is shown that the public sector finds more value in the transit system, and is encouraged by redevelopment opportunities that access to transit affords. Transit has not been a major impetus for private investment, but growing awareness about development potential in the Historic Core is fueled by the collective public sector investments that are helping to revive the area.

The Fourth and Hill area still remains a work in progress. The improved economy has begun to show promise for redevelopment opportunities in the Historic Core. Public sector involvement, although limited financially, can continue to broaden public awareness and encourage private sector investment. The Metro rail network, once closer to completion and carrying more passengers, can perhaps be effective in attracting future development opportunities. All of these promising signs will take time before the positive results are fully realized.

If one imagines the future of Fourth and Hill, there are several outcomes that could result. The area could deteriorate, become extremely popular and trendy, or find a middle ground. The third scenario is in between the first two, in which the culturally diverse character of the district is balanced with the introduction of new uses and residents. In my opinion, this is the most difficult scenario to sustain, but not impossible to achieve. The Historic Core should build off of its dynamic cultural base and distinguish itself from other popular pedestrian-oriented destinations, such as Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade and Old Town Pasadena.

By looking at Fourth and Hill and other case studies, it is apparent that transit is not a single solution to revitalizing the inner city. Any community that seeks redevelopment will have unique situations and require different methods for dealing with deterrents to development. If lack of accessibility is a deterrent, than it is more likely that provision of transit service will be effective. However, many characteristics of a transit system—the extent of the network, level of service, and the type of technology used—can also make a difference in transit’s ability to foster redevelopment.
In conclusion, the future of transportation planning and urban revitalization needs to be rethought. Communities can no longer have blind faith in transit and assume that the presence of a subway station will assure revitalization. If they are to benefit from accessibility to transit, there needs to be a more progressive approach to transportation planning and redevelopment strategies. The current reactive method of transit-oriented development is unreliable and often very costly. There is no simple solution to improving the transportation planning process because it is so heavily influenced by political will. However, the desire to improve the transit planning process and better understand how communities can achieve revitalization objectives is a step in the right direction.
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Interviewees

Frances Banerjee  
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Duane Cameron  
President, Systems Development - Subway Terminal Building

Robert Fejarang  
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Vice President, The Yellin Company - Grand Central Square

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Doug Suisman  
President, Suisman Design/Public Works Design - Hill Street Corridor Master Plan

John Vallance  
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