

L.A. MICRO-PUBLICS:

Expanding the Seams of the Transportation System

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Bachelor of Architecture
The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 2005

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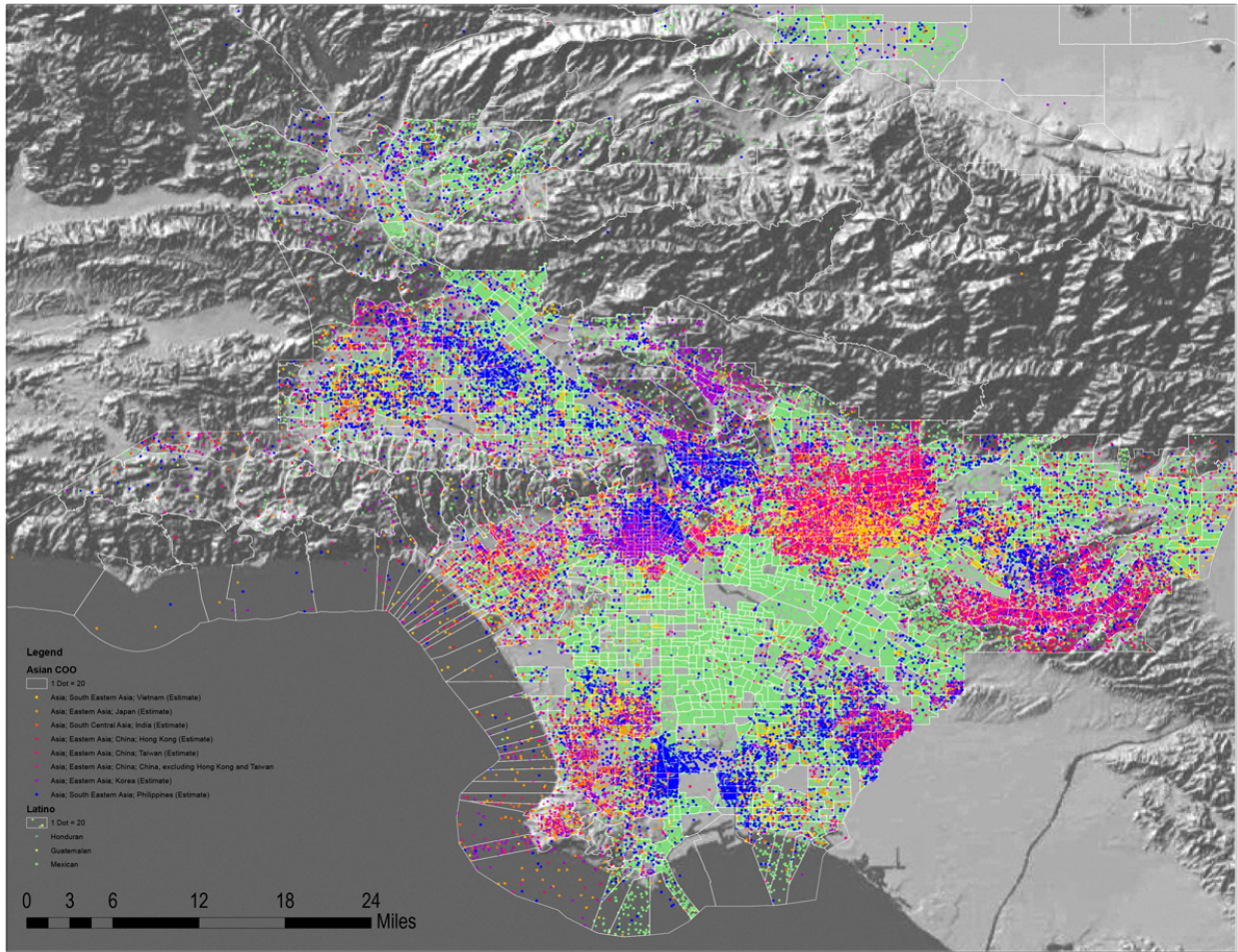


Figure 1: Top 10 ethnic groups in Los Angeles County, according to the 2009 American Communities Survey. Image by Author.

Abstract

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ABSTRACT

The global city is the privileged site of “repositioning ... citizenship in practice,”¹ where traditional notions of identity and citizenship are being radically reconstructed. This thesis examines contemporary Los Angeles as such a site, a heterotopia built on difference, without a coherent civic identity. In this context, the region’s transportation system emerges as both a form of governmentality and the “strategic terrain”² for the struggle to redefine citizenship in the urban environment. The system itself is a space of contestation, where the struggle to claim the Lefebvrian “right to the city” in the form of mobility is currently being played out.

If design can be an instrument of governmentality to propagate exclusion, fear, and resistance to difference in contemporary cities, then it must also have the power to accomplish the opposite. This thesis proposes a strategy of design interventions to the existing L.A. transportation system, as explored in the conditions of the nexus, the crossing, the node, and the terminus, with the aim to open up a new micro-public realm. These new urban spaces of encounter, eroticism, and exposure to othernesses in Los Angeles can push this city to a more urban, more inclusive future.

Thesis Supervisor:

Julian Beinart, Professor of Architecture

1 Saskia Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage: Emergent subjects and spaces for politics,” *Globalizations*, 2:1, 79.

2 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 89.

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Introduction

This thesis considers the global city as a privileged site of “repositioning ... citizenship in practice,”³ where traditional notions of identity and citizenship are being radically reconstructed. The socially and economically polarized nature of the global city, as the physical locus where financial, political, and cultural forces converge, together with vast migratory and disadvantaged populations, makes it today’s “strategic terrain”⁴ for this struggle. Thus, the urban condition is intricately tied to the socio-political and physical context of the global city.

As these cities become increasingly diverse and polarized, and create the material and conceptual grounds for the struggle to redefine traditional notions of citizenship and belonging, I seek to reimagine what architecture and design can offer to this discourse. This is a discourse that is essentially social, driven by global economic forces. The thesis is an attempt to employ design as a transformative agent in larger social contexts. It imagines what could be a formal correlate to the work of political and social theorists who have written about this shift in society, such as Saskia Sassen, Ernesto Laclau, Leonie Sandercock, and Iris Marion Young, and those who have elaborated on how these forces impact actual physical spaces and places of cities, such as Ash Amin, L.A. geographer Edward Soja, and Mike Davis.

While these authors lay the theoretical groundwork for framing this new urban condition and new urban subject, they remain alternatively frustratingly and tantalizingly vague about what concretely is to be done about it. They offer specific critiques, but vague and idealized solutions. Many of them are extremely clear in identifying and condemning ways in which architecture and planning practices have historically worked to reinforce economic, societal, and political structures of oppression and power. For example, Soja points to the “unjust geographies” of the banlieus of Paris, Soweto in South Africa, the methods of occupation in Palestine, “defensive” or “security-obsessed” architecture, what Davis calls “fortress urbanism” in L.A., and the disappearance of public space, both conceptually and practically, in contemporary urban life.⁵ Sandercock, also, details the ways in which schools of urbanism, like CIAM and the Chicago school in the 19th and 20th centuries, failed categorically and catastrophically to recognize the importance of cities for real communities and the collective memory of its citizens. Through these examples, these writers chronicle the failure of architecture and planning to produce cities of justice and pleasure. These conditions are the pathological symptoms manifest spatially and formally to indicate the inability of urban environments and the urban subject to navigate the increasingly complex nature of urban subjects.

I approach this discourse specifically as a designer, as someone who speculates formally and spatially about what architecture can do to resist such patterns of systematic injustice and power in today’s cities. I acknowledge that these issues are not fundamentally architectural, and that despite the best of intentions, form and design are peripheral in the larger discourse about society and equality. Yet, form and space are something to be explored in this discourse. My motivation for framing the project in this

3 Saskia Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage: Emergent subjects and spaces for politics,” *Globalizations*, 2:1, 79.

4 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 89.

5 Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

primarily social manner is that, if architecture is indeed such an instrument of governmentality, used to propagate exclusion, fear, and resistance to difference in contemporary cities, it must also have some power to accomplish the opposite.

Los Angeles is my site of investigation, a city that hosts an extremely diverse population, and which is, and will continue to be, a growing metropolis of financial, political, and cultural influence. It is also a city historically built on difference, or an exclusionist idea of “community,” in the way that it grew and evolved spatially, and in its formal characteristics. While it can be argued that difference is a quality found in all cities, and that means of exclusion are also what create special districts and unique neighborhood identities, in Los Angeles that fails because of its geographic spread. Because of its vast size, various social and cultural groups exist side by side with the minimal contact with others, geographically and systematically. Many criticize Los Angeles as lacking a civic identity, as being an agglomeration of independent and insular enclaves without achieving some larger collective civic identity.

This thesis is not an ethnographic investigation into any particular enclaves of L.A., but is rather concerned about the seams between. Rather than the particular, I am interested in the universal. The seams provide the possibility for a new kind of public practice and space in Los Angeles. If L.A. is an agglomeration of various particularisms, with little contact between different groups, I am interested in expanding the seams in between, as urban spaces of encounter, eroticism, and exposure. (This concept will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.) The hope is that through public and urban-scale architecture, there might be a way to push the formal and spatial characteristic of Los Angeles toward one that is better able to foster an urban civic identity. The ultimate aim is to push the city’s ethos toward negotiation and acceptance of othernesses, starting from just exposure and physical co-presence, but moving toward dialogue, exhibition, self-expression, celebration, and finally to an urban citizenship practice that is inclusive and robust.

I focus on the region’s transportation system as that “seam” and my site for intervention. The system itself is a technique of governmentality in the region, a mechanism of social control, manipulating population (bodies) and territory (space). In this specific case, the transportation plays the key role of allowing or denying access, or mobility in the city—what I argue constitutes the Lefebvrian idea of the “right to the city” in Los Angeles. Currently, in this growing and vast metropolis, only 10% of the population uses the public mass transit, most of whom are disproportionately poor and immigrant. However, the system itself is highly politicized, representing and participating in the polarizing of different social and economic groups in the region. It thus emerges as the “strategic terrain” of contestation, where such groups like the Bus Riders Union fight for the right to gain access and mobility for disadvantaged populations who depend on the system.

The assumptions I am making for the premise of this thesis are the following: the city will continue to grow, and become increasingly diverse. Due to the stresses that L.A. already poses for the region’s limited natural resources, it must densify its existing metro area, rather than spread further, to accommodate this population. Furthermore, in whatever combination or format, the mobility options for the region must also diversify, even as the automobile persists as the main mode of transportation. In order to remain viable as a major city, those governing the city understand that the crucial aspect of livability, that which makes a city competitive, depends on such things as ease of mobility and access to mass transportation options. Those managing the region know this: the county, the city, and the state are currently in the

process of investing billions of dollars into implementing new means of controlling transportation in the region, from trials of High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes on freeways, to controversial investments in rail and accompanying transit-oriented developments.

In this context, I propose a re-conceptualization of public transportation system, as a means to expand the public seams of Los Angeles. The transportation system is already poised, from a governance point of view, to effect a major transformation of the region, in how people live and move. But it also has the potential to be a more democratic, more widely used, more urbanizing force in the region, to change the very nature of public space in Los Angeles.

The urban design proposal component of this thesis thus seeks to present a reimagining of the public transportation system as a series of expanded seams, or micro-publics, within the realm of the public in the Los Angeles region. These are places of ambiguity of community identity and which require negotiations of difference. This is a proposal of strategy, one without a concrete master plan, but a means to open up and make useful currently existing spaces in the Los Angeles Metro system. To do this, I define intervention at **four typological conditions** of the transportation system, also offering real places as test sites. These four sites will provide the opportunity to address seam-ness at **four different scales of size and ambition**, and suggest the implementation of these interventions across the system in different permutations. These four typological conditions are:

1. **The Nexus** (Downtown 7th Street Metro Center). This is the biggest and most symbolically loaded of the sites. It occupies the city center, among other institutions. Today this site is not really a place, even though it is the end of the Blue Line and a major connection point for buses.
2. **The Crossing** (Wilmington-Imperial). The crossing is the seam between different modes of mobility, e.g. freeway and mass transit. This site, in the Willowbrook/Watts area, connects the Blue Line, which is a surface-street train, and the Green Line, which is a train that shares the freeway, and local buses. It is a hostile and isolated junction, with underused but also formally evocative leftover space under the freeways.
3. **The Node** (Florence stop on the Blue Line) of a neighborhood scale. The node is a seam between a community and the public transport system. Currently, the metro line physically divides the community, and offer marginal waiting spaces. This can be a place of exchange of information and lingering for the neighborhood, hosting more than one variable of speed: one fast, one lingering.
4. **The Terminus** (the Artesia Transit Center), a Park & Ride site. This is a seam between the system and the periphery, the mass transit and the automobile, the urban and the ex-urban, and the public and private realms. Currently, the site is a vast and forlorn parking lot, crossed with electric power lines, and visited by buses every few minutes. It is completely isolated from its surroundings.

In proposing programmatic and spatial changes to these sites, I seek to produce more than a technocratic improvement on the existing system. The larger goal of this thesis is to offer a way with which Los Angeles can move toward a more urban (programmatically diverse, accommodating of differences) future, not through a wholesale rejection and scrapping of its current configuration, but by incrementally

changing the nature of public infrastructure.

Ultimately the biggest challenge to the premise of this thesis is the question: Is social justice and a society's ability to deal with othernesses really a design problem? While I acknowledge that the challenges facing today's global cities and its inhabitants are neither the fault of nor solvable by architecture alone, this thesis attempts to imagine how design interventions, their concrete form and use, might provide a way to resist the economical, social and political forces that dominate today's cities.

Theoretical Context

The City

The city, as a concept and geo-political entity, has always been identified as a place of difference—against the barbarian, the non-citizen, the vast and untamed hinterland itself. The locus of intensity of crossings of various networks, the city is a place of material and symbolic privilege. And just as city form has evolved morphologically to reflect evolutions of economics, society, and politics, so too is the urban subject evolving. In today’s globalized and networked world, the city as a conceptual entity is facing a paradigm shift: it is no longer defined against the theoretical ‘other,’ but it is a space where multiplicities rule.

In the global economy, cities no longer command only their immediately adjacent regions and their resources. Instead, a new system of globally connected relationships and hierarchies has emerged. The most influential of this new network of cities is what Saskia Sassen has dubbed the global city—a place of not only regional influence, but global influence, controlling world financial markets and the production of culture and innovation. Sassen has referred specifically to New York, London, and Tokyo as these global cities, mainly due to their primacy in controlling financial institutions.

But beyond these aspects, these global cities play an interesting role in the allocation of one specific resource: people. As migration theorist Douglass Massey summarizes, “the international movement of labor generally follows the international movement of goods and capital in the opposite direction.”¹ Migration theorists explain the new system of international migration in the globalized world market through the “World Systems Theory,” which postulates that as capital from multi-national corporations infuse peripheral, non-capitalist societies, local economies and communities are also displaced, both financially and socially. Land consolidation by these corporations leads to mass displacement of local peoples. The mechanization of labor through capital-intensive investments displaces workers, and labor markets weaken traditional labor relationship structures. Furthermore, “[t]he more outmigration, the more people have access to the funds necessary to buy land, leading to additional purchases by migrants and more land withdrawn from production, creating still more pressure for outmigration (Rhoades, 1978; Reichtel 1982; Mines, 1984; Wiest, 1984).”² In addition, factory work for the local population prime these people for modern consumption habits, without necessarily ensuring lifetime income capacity to support those habits. Thus, within the process of globalization itself are the causes instigating the perpetuation of human migration, the displacement and movement of people across territories. Thus, global cities attract displaced people with a strong material and ideo-psychological pull.

From an urbanist perspective, this generalized overview of international migration thus creates an interesting socio-political and ideological condition centered around a few global cities. According to the

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- 1 Douglas S. Massey *et al.*, “Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal.” *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Sept 1993), 446.
 - 2 Massey, “Theories of International Migration,” 452.

“Cumulative Causation and Institutional Theory,” whatever combination of the drivers of international migration, supporting networks makes migration progressively easier by declining the monetary and psychological costs and risks for the migrants. And the supporting institutions – whether they are black market human trafficking or humanitarian advocacy institutions – further entrench these systems of migration, reinforcing the cycle of cumulative pressure to migrate. That is why, ironically, the better-educated people are in the home region, the more incentive they have to migrate. In this way, migration itself becomes a rite of passage for ambitious individuals, creating a depletion of human capital from outlying regions toward global cities.

The global cities, then, are the urban stages where all of these forces and actors comes together. They are sites both of great influence, and of agglomeration of human capital. These cities reinforce their positions of power, as their activities create the conditions for human migration movement at the global scale, and attract people from all over the world to concentrate at the urban scale. But this intensity also creates the sociological condition of the concentrations and juxtaposition of global capital and influence with vast disadvantaged populations, increased social polarization, and increased diversity in the population. While diversity itself has always been a hallmark of city life, the degree of heterogeneity, the mobility of these groups and the transnational relationships that are established are unprecedented. This is what makes these global cities the privileged site of “repositioning ... citizenship in practice”³ and the “strategic terrain”⁴ in the struggle to redefine normative ideals of identity and citizenship in the contemporary urban stage.

Of course, international migration is nothing new in the history of mankind. As long as there have been crossroads people have had to negotiate difference and coexist side by side in urban settings. However, what distinguishes the conditions today in contemporary liberal democracies is the emergence of a new definition of citizenship. As postulated by Sassen and other theorists, the concept of citizenship, in the broadest sense, is no longer limited to a legal or political designation, but engenders a new definition more related to “a normative project or an aspiration.”⁵ This new definition of citizenship emphasizes a condition of participation in public life, be it the workings of the city-system or economy, contributions to the culture of the place, civic involvement, strong community ties, etc. In this way, the very institution of citizenship is undergoing a transformation, as different identities, groups, or particularisms struggle for a claim to the city and to ideological rights, in both legal and material terms. Contemporary planners like Peggy Levitt champion the idea that in today’s context, notions of citizenship must shift from the current national model to a transnational lens, because the reality is that most people today have “two feet in two places.”⁶ Migration is shifting society to a new norm of movement and a corresponding fluidity of identity, which begs the formation of new institutions – economical, political, religious, cultural, and social – to accommodate this change. They must be more inclusive of this super- ethnic/ religious/ political/ sexual diversity in today’s cities. Thus, the notion of citizenship is shifting to a more active, more participatory practice than a simple legal designation.

3 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 79.

4 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 89.

5 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 83.

6 Professor Peggy Levitt, lecture at the *Reinventing the City @ MIT* Symposium, “International Migration,” MIT, 7 Nov 2011

Ethnic Identity In Los Angeles

One of the great things about this city is that it is a place of immigrants. There are two kinds of immigrants: there are immigrants from foreign countries, and there are immigrants from all over the United States.⁷

Los Angeles is a fragmented city. It is ethnically diverse, but groups tend to be culturally and functionally highly insular in their occupation of space and habits. Soja writes, “contemporary Los Angeles represents the world in connected urban microcosms, reproducing *in situ* the customary colours and confrontations of a hundred different homelands.”⁸ In a sense, Los Angeles is a city that is composed of many cities, a home that is linked to many other homes. L.A. architect Michael Maltzan describes Los Angeles as “not so much a multicultural city but a city of many cultures that are very often separated from one another”⁹ in what he describes as silos, with “distinct precincts and districts that allow the social structures and separations to stay intact.”¹⁰ In addition to this ethnic or cultural differentiation, it is also highly “occupationally differentiated and socially segmented.”¹¹

With this highlighting of the fragmentation that exists in Los Angeles, in terms of ethnicity and culture, socio-economic status, and lifestyles, I will use political scientist Ernesto Laclau’s writing to conceptualize and problematize this condition. While some may argue that Los Angeles represents a successful multicultural society, I will use Laclau’s writing to undermine the existing condition as an undesirable, even dangerous, trajectory.

The Particular vs. The Universal

In his article, “Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity,” Ernesto Laclau addresses the philosophical position from which to understand the particular and the universal, or individualism and collectivism, in contemporary society where multiple identities proliferate. When Laclau wrote about “the multiplication of new (and not so new) identities in the collapse of the places from which universal subjects once spoke,”¹² he was responding specifically to the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, his point is still relevant, if not increasingly so, as debates and even eruptions of violence proliferate over how societies and cities all over the developed world can integrate, assimilate, or simply deal with vast populations of “others” encroaching upon their spheres of life, and seemingly threaten “native” identities. This struggle in practice is manifest in the arena of politics, through “the new forms of multicultural protest and self-assertion in the United States, as well as all the forms of contestation associated with the

7 Michael Maltzan, *No more Play: conversations on open space and urban speculation in Los Angeles and beyond* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011), 154.

8 Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso Press, 1989), 223.

9 Maltzan, *No more play*, 52.

10 Maltzan, *No More Play*, 129.

11 Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 208.

12 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 84.

new social movements.”¹³

Laclau insists that the concept of the universal cannot be completely discarded. Instead, Laclau asserts that the concept of the “universal” rejected by revolutionaries was not the true universal, but a hegemonic usurpation of the seat of the universal by a particular. Thus, Laclau defends the requirement for the universal in order to ensure the existence of the particular in a constant negotiation with the universal. Laclau writes, “the universal is the symbol of a missing fullness, and the particular exists only in the contradictory movement of asserting a differential identity and simultaneously canceling it through its subsumption into a nondifferential medium.”¹⁴ In the contemporary seeming collapse of the universal, its subsumption into a field of a proliferation of multiple identities, Laclau maintains that the universal is necessary precisely in order to avoid identities of mere difference that do not appeal to that “missing fullness” – that, for Laclau, is the danger of the condition of the South African apartheid, for example – a politically and ethically untenable position of “*pure* difference.”¹⁵

This definition for the condition for democracy is an essentially and necessarily an unstable one: the universal is necessary for the particular to exist and assert itself as a particular, but it must also constantly expand and detach itself from a specific “hegemonic” group. “If democracy *is* possible, it is because the universal does not have any necessary body, and necessary content. Instead, different groups compete to give their particular aims a temporary function of universal representation.”¹⁶ Laclau suggests the universal as a blank, shifting, fluid ground of contest and contestation, which must by its nature be constantly debated over and redefined. Similar to the arguments that the definition of citizenship must take into account more than a legal designation to include aspects of participation, Laclau’s framing of the notion of the universal emphasizes a process that creates the basis and the possibility for these individual particularisms to exist.

To apply this theory to the contemporary condition in Los Angeles is somewhat limiting. In a society such as Los Angeles, in which no ethnic group holds a majority (Mexican is the biggest minority), this issue of the nature of the relationship between the particular and the universal presents the problem of how to understand the idea of the universal in this particular city today. It can be argued that in L.A., various identities do often function without appeal to the universal rather smoothly. Aside from the Watts Riots of 1965 and 1992, Los Angeles can be seen as a remarkably well-functioning, if not harmonious amalgam of different ethnic groups, which also allows many of these groups to prosper. It may even be a “success” in terms of being a city able to absorb and nurture many different identities, who are both able to retain aspects of their identity and to assimilate into productive bodies.

However, while each group may take care of its own, there is no universal in terms of civic life in the city of Los Angeles. There is no common experience, no cohesive civic identity, other than perhaps in its very multiplicity. The concept of multiculturalism is itself propagated and commercialized as a marketable feature of the city, while there is nothing really measurable about the experience and progress of this multicultural project in the city. Is this a problem? Is Los Angeles working well in its current state as a mosaic of othernesses, a prime example of robust and diverse urban mechanism by which to accommodate

13 Sassen, “The repositioning of citizenship and alienage,” 84.

14 Ernesto Laclau, “Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity,” *October* 61 (1992): 83-90, on 89

15 Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*. (London: Verso, 1996), 29.

16 Laclau, “Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity,” 90.

a variety of ethnicities, lifestyles, and wealth, without too much friction or violence? What is the necessity for the functioning “universal” to which all of its particularities can appeal? The reality of Los Angeles recalls what is, for Laclau, an unsatisfactory and even dangerous proposition: the position of mere difference creates what he calls a “self-apartheid” on the way to “total segregationism, the mere opposition of one particularism to another.”¹⁷

My thesis is not about particular forms and practices identity in insular settings, but rather in the moment when these different groups position themselves and their individual identities *in relation to the collective identity and the whole city*. This is urban citizenship practice, the participation of the expansion of the universal, as indicated by Laclau.

On Multiculturalism

In this new reality of a multiplication of particularisms, or individual identities, coexisting in a vast metropolis as many different cities, how can society reconcile respect for diversity to some appeal to the universal, or a common civic agenda? Many political theorists and social scientists have written about the emerging urban subject and the entailing changes in the notion of citizenship. In order to consider this problem, I examine three social thinkers who offer perspectives on the new city of multiplicities: Iris Marion Young, from a social/political theory perspective; Leonie Sandercock, as a planner who has lived in and thought specifically about Los Angeles; and economic geographer Ash Amin, who is primarily concerned with the problems of the United Kingdom, but whose writings nonetheless illuminate this issue. Each acknowledges the importance of cities in the emergence of a new kind of citizenship in the contemporary conditions of multiculturalism, and each also have a particular position on the role of design and architecture to this particular problem.

Iris Marion Young

In her work, Iris Marion Young examines how social oppression is proliferated structurally in society through exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. For Young, the ideal to which to work toward is not necessarily unity. Instead, “Social justice... requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote the reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression.”¹⁸ She takes apart the modern catchword, community, as a desirable ideal in the contemporary city, at least from the pro-diversity perspective:

The ideal of community denies and represses social difference, the fact that the polity cannot be thought of as a unity in which all participants share a common experience and common values. In its privileging of face-to-face relations, moreover, the ideal of community denies difference in the form of the temporal and spatial distancing that characterizes social process.¹⁹

17 Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 32.

18 Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 47.

19 Young, *Difference*, 227.

For Young, it is more important that the city provide spaces for differences just to coexist without oppression:

As a normative ideal, city life instantiates social relations of difference without exclusion. Different groups dwell in the city alongside one another, of necessity interacting in city spaces. If city politics is to be democratic and not dominated by the point of view of one group, it must be a politics that takes account of and provides voice for the different groups that dwell together in the city **without forming a community**.²⁰

Thus, for Young, the ideal of city life is not about community, or meaningful interactions, or melting away of all differences. It is as simple as shared spaces and institutions, without violence and without forced togetherness.

I propose to construct a normative ideal of city life as an alternative to both the ideal of community and the liberal individualism it criticizes as asocial. By ‘city life’ I mean a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness.²¹

She outlines the following as the components for her “normative ideal of city life:” social difference without exclusion, variety, eroticism (in the aesthetic-material sense, as well as the inter-personal, psychological sense), and publicity, through physical co-presence. In the above prescriptions, Young stays rather theoretical about her vision of the ideal for the successful multicultural contemporary city, relating mostly to the experience of individuals at the everyday scale. If I were to attempt a lesson from this text, I could derive from the ideas of variety and eroticism the suggestion for formal conditions of heterogeneity and novelty. The idea of publicity is more planning-oriented, to be dictated by use.

Leonie Sandercock

Likewise, planner Leonie Sandercock considers the implications of globalization and mass migration on the social and political reality of the city. To set the stage, Sandercock explains why the issues of integration and cultural coexistence are especially relevant today, especially in developed countries with aging populations:

... there aren’t enough young workers in the service industries to physically take care of aging baby boomer bodies, and not enough young working tax payers to economically maintain the pension benefits for these aging populations. Thus are long-held notions of national identity – notions that assumed affinity, shared history, homogeneity – being profoundly unsettled. And this unsettling has its most concrete expression in cities and neighbourhoods, in the form of conflicts over space itself, and over services, signage and symbols in the urban environment.²²

Sandercock notes, “The twentieth-century role of planning has been to regulate the production and use of space. In this state-designated role, **planners have acted as spatial police**, regulating not only land uses

20 Young, *Difference*, 227, emphasis mine.

21 Young, *Difference*, 237.

22 Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 23-24.

but, often, who – that is, what categories of people – might use that land; thereby **regulating bodies in space, administering who can do what and be where, and even, when.**²³ Here, Sandercock is referencing Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality: “The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.”²⁴ As I will note in Chapter 3, this kind of practice of power over society is exercised not only in the tactics of planning and the police to regulate what kinds of bodies are allowed in which spaces, but also in infrastructural systems and services, such as the regional transportation system in the metropolitan region of Los Angeles.

Rejecting the Modernist paradigms of planning, both CIAM and the Chicago School models, as misled, destructive, masculinist and egotistical, Sandercock calls for a bottom-up, “insurgent urbanism,” with an expanded repertoire of planning tools, such as increased dialogue, observation, contemplation, and action-planning. Sandercock also relates this specifically to the experience of migrants in cities: “The urban experiences of new immigrants, their struggles to redefine the conditions of belonging to ‘their’ new society, are reshaping cities the world over.”²⁵ Thus, Sandercock also reinforces the idea that cities are the privileged sites of the emergence of a new identity and a new urban practice. And like Young, Sandercock also questions the standards by which planners and theorists measure the success of this endeavor. For Sandercock as well, the idea of community or unity is no longer necessarily desirable in this new urban context, in cities of a multitude of identities: “As new and more complex kinds of ethnic diversity come to dominate cities, the very notion of a ‘shared interest’ may come into increasing question.”²⁶

Sandercock issues a rallying-cry for the planning profession. Rather than accepting the failures of planning, she points to this “rise of civil society, and the new politics of social movements” that are “having a profound effect on the shaping of the cities and regions of the next millennium, leading to the central importance of a new ‘cultural politics of difference.’”²⁷ For Sandercock, these ‘spaces of insurgent citizenship,’ or stages of struggle, are witnessed in ethnic neighborhoods, migrant labor camps, sweatshops, and places of worship.

The goal, for Sandercock, is what she calls the City of Memory, the City of Desire, and the City of Spirit, aspects of the city that have previously been ignored to the detriment to the modern city. For Sandercock, memory is closely linked to identity, and cities, as physical and lived-in spaces, have a role in preserving cultural identity. “Cities are the repositories of memories, and they are one of memory’s texts.”²⁸ Citing Dolores Hayden on American cities, Sandercock writes that “public space can help to nurture a sense of cultural belonging and at the same time acknowledge and respect diversity.”²⁹ She goes on: “Urban landscapes are storehouses for individual and collective social memories. Moving beyond the familiar architectural approach to cultural heritage which favours individual buildings, Hayden argues for a deeper

23 Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II*, 21, emphasis mine.

24 Michel Foucault, *Power*, Michel, James D. Faubion, and Robert Hurley, eds. (New York: New Press, 2000), 219-220.

25 Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II*, 20.

26 Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II*, 20-21.

27 Leonie Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis : Planning for Multicultural Cities*. (New York: John Wiley, 1998), 2-3.

28 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 207-208.

29 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 208-210.

understanding of the entire urban cultural landscape as an important part of American history.”³⁰ In this sense, the experience of memory and its contribution to identity is intimately connected to the physical environment, to the habits of individual and of groups.

Secondly, the city is also a place for desire, that is to say, a place of “the spontaneous spectacle of strangers and chance encounters.”³¹ She again references Young: “The erotic meaning of the city arises from its social and spatial inexhaustibility. A place of many places, the city folds over on itself in so many layers and relationships that it is incomprehensible. One cannot ‘take it in’, one never feels as though there is nothing new and interesting to explore, no new and interesting people to meet. (Young: 1990:240)”³² Sandercock, as a planner and not a designer, supports the idea that the formal qualities of the city has something to contribute to this larger agenda, and is thus something contemporary planners can actively aim for. For Sandercock, this entails a change in the management of spaces, i.e. decreasing regulation of public spaces,³³ but for urban designers, this can be interpreted in many ways formally, such as the provision of un-programmed spaces at appropriate, if not intimates scales within a design, and for differentiated forms, with richness of texture that is legible in the plan as well as in spatial experience.

Lastly, she promotes a City of Spirit, a reintroduction of the idea of the sacred to the city. For Sandercock, the modernist planning tradition was inherently flawed, despite its good intentions, because of its reliance on pure rationality.³⁴ She cites practices that locate and commemorate places as sacred to a particular group as a chance for engagement. This idea of the sacred is perhaps the most problematic in the context of the multicultural global city. The nature of multiculturalism unavoidably confronts the problems of differing and sometimes conflicting ideas about sacred spaces, and how they should be dealt with. Even the ideals of acceptance of differences and working out conflicts through dialogue and democratic participation can be understood as a hegemonic usurpation of the universal. And it necessarily means that not all interests or ideologies about the sacred can be met. At this conceptual quandary the work of Laclau again becomes useful. The idea that the universal exists not as a pre-existing given, but a process of expansion through jostling and struggles between particular particulars but ultimately validated by the resultant whole, allows for the possibility for the definition of the sacred to be a part of the larger project. In the city, institutions play a key role in providing the space and programming of the sacred for its population.

Ash Amin

Amin describes why, for him, the (global) city is the privileged site of urban citizenship and democratic practice: “Cities are massive reservoirs of institutionalized activity, around which urban democracy can be built and extended.”³⁵ Again, the basis for this emphasis on the city is the idea of an extreme concentration of different kinds of energy that not only perpetuate its own power, but which allows for the possibility of the emergence of new and unanticipated byproducts. Amin also acknowledges that consensus is almost by definition impossible in the global city. He writes that instead, “our interest has been less in the search for a common good for consensus – and impossible challenge in the heterogeneous city – than in ways in

30 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 208-210.

31 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 210.

32 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 211.

33 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 212.

34 Sandercock, *Toward Cosmopolis*, 213.

35 Ash Amin *et al.*, *Cities for the Many Not the Few* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2000), 42.

which living together in cities is an enriching and creative experience.”³⁶ Nonetheless, this, for Amin, does not preclude “some notion of shared belonging, a sense of common citizenship, an idea that there might after all be such a thing as society.” He goes on: “A city politics which could achieve this would be – what we are aiming at – a confident democracy based on active citizenship, even when it clashes with ‘official’ visions of what is right and who has a right.”³⁷ Again, this process-based project toward this “common citizenship” recalls Laclau’s unstable and shifting definition of the universal.

Amin, unlike Young and Sandercock, takes a direct position on the role of urban design within this discussion. For Amin, it is a mistake to think that design itself is the answer these problems. In his assessment and critique of Lord Richard Rogers’s report, *Towards an urban renaissance* (Urban Task Force, 1999) for “design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility”³⁸, Amin lauds the report for its promotion of urban density, compact, mixed-use developments, alternative modes of transport such as pedestrianized zones, public transport, cycle routes, and mobility for the elderly, its appeal for environmental sustainability and emphasis on participatory planning. However, he ultimately judges the report as falling short, precisely because of its emphasis on design rather than on processes, or mechanisms, for urban citizenship. For Amin, the design-based approach does not properly acknowledge the dynamism of the city, and is thus fundamentally flawed. For Amin, there is no utopian harmony to which to aim, but only processes and mechanisms for social participation in civic life. Also, public space as an architectural idea as used today (“riverside cafes, shopping mall atria and bijou restaurants”³⁹) falls ghastly short of any meaningful vision of civic life. Amin writes,

‘The public realm’ is too often evoked as a neutral space where all can come together unproblematically. Yet we know this not to be the case. Public space at its worst can be the site of one group’s dominance over others. At its best it can be a place of active engagement and debate. The city is a place of difference, and that includes different interests. A policy which does not square up to that will not address the underlying problems.⁴⁰

In short, urban citizenship is a policy problem, not just a design problem. “If we are in search of the public realm, we need to look beyond the public spaces of the city, starting with the public services and welfare services... Libraries, museums, health, housing, transport, education, and the other welfare services – if generously funded, professionally delivered, and universally provided – will meet basic needs and provide a minimum set of opportunities for social citizenship.”⁴¹

Amin writes, “We must ask ourselves if we want our cities to become mosaics of geographically inward-looking communities... the broader tendencies are to pull apart the isomorphism of community and place and to emphasise the multiplicity of all our identities. We must work towards an urban social geography which can allow those tendencies to flourish.”⁴² In this obvious reference to the reality of cities like Los Angeles, a mosaic of insular silos, Amin appeals to a different vision for how cities might negotiate the

36 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 45.

37 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 31.

38 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, vii.

39 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 42.

40 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 4.

41 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 33.

42 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 41.

multicity of identities, both through policy and design. Amin is challenging urbanists to consider “how to produce a city within which it is possible to negotiate these increasingly interlocking notions of difference, and a city which is capable of nurturing, and coping with, political participation in such a complexity.”⁴³

Social Theory & Urban Form: Drawing a Conclusions from Above Positions

The above authors offer insightful criticisms of the dangers and unviability of cities that are not capable of dealing with difference. However, their visions for the new cities of difference are not explicit about real implications, especially at the formal level. While her dissection of the insidious means of oppression in contemporary society are astute and cutting, Young stays very much at the conceptual level when she offers her vision for the future—that cities be more sensorially “erotic” and formally varied or heterogeneous. Sandercock blasts the failure of the utopian visions of architects as dangerous and destructive, misled by a masculinist and determinist faith in the power of design alone. Amin goes so far as to say that a preoccupation with form shields the real issue in urban life, that of policy. Of course, to offer a vision to a problem of this scope and complexity one must necessarily be somewhat vague, to remain open to unforeseen possibilities, or “virtualities.”⁴⁴ But what I take away from these readings is the idea that cities as physical places and forms have a responsibility to the various identities and memories of the communities and cultures that inhabit them. Also important is the idea that designers and planners must strive for accommodating social difference without exclusion, while enabling variety, eroticism, and a possibility for a public life.

43 Amin, *Cities for the Many*, 9.

44 Ash Amin and N.J. Thrift, *Cities : Reimagining the Urban* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 4.

Los Angeles: Background & Analysis

The Territory & The Population

The Metropolitan Los Angeles region today is a veritable heterotopia of vast territory and population. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the region hosts 17.8 million people in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside Combined Statistical Area (CSA). Los Angeles County itself is composed of a population of 9.8 million, in 88 incorporated cities. Home to the affluent, influential class of capital as well as a vast population of native poor, Los Angeles is supported by a two-tier economy—third world realities exist side-by-side with first world influence and power. About 15.7% of the population lives below the poverty line.¹

Despite some decline in industrial output in the 1970s and '80s, the region still hosts numerous important manufacturing, technology, and creative industries, and even its suburban areas are becoming increasingly urbanized and centers of specialized employment, in what Edward Soja calls the Exopolis phenomenon. While the industries that made the region a powerhouse in industrial manufacturing have largely left, the high-tech, entertainment and creative industries anchor the region. The region also buttresses major industrial infrastructure at the national level, with the Long Beach-Los Angeles Ports and the Alameda corridor feeding goods into the rest of the country. The ports, for example, together process approximately 40% of imports entering the United States today, and are projected to grow further. Los Angeles International Airport was the sixth busiest airport in the world in 2011, and is the largest airport in western U.S. in terms of flight operations, passenger traffic, and air cargo.

Demographically speaking, there is no real majority in Los Angeles. Latinos constitute the biggest minority, and Asian, Black, and Anglo populations are each well represented. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 35.4% of this population are foreign-born persons, of 140 countries of origin, speaking 224 languages. This ethnic diversity is reflected in “official” ethnic towns or enclaves (Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Boyle Heights, Little Armenia, Little Saigon, Koreatown, Historic Filipinotown, etc.), but that diversity is also increasingly dispersed and mixed throughout the region, especially as those immigrants settle in and move up the socioeconomic ladder. These ethnic towns are an important step along the migration and settling-in process, acclimating new immigrants to the host country in various ways. The success of that process of integration can be measured by how quickly people are able to move out of those areas into more mixed communities. In addition, the boundaries of these ethnic towns are constantly changing. While the city might officially give recognition to and celebrate these towns, through ethnically-inspired signposts and other markers, the reality is that in a span of several years the demographic make-up of an area can shift completely, from one group to another. For example, the Koreatown district in Downtown Los Angeles is becoming predominantly Hispanic, and the City of Garden Grove in Orange County,

1 U.S. Census Bureau, L.A. County QuickFacts, available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06037.html> (Accessed 23 May 2012). The figure is 19.5% for the City of Los Angeles.

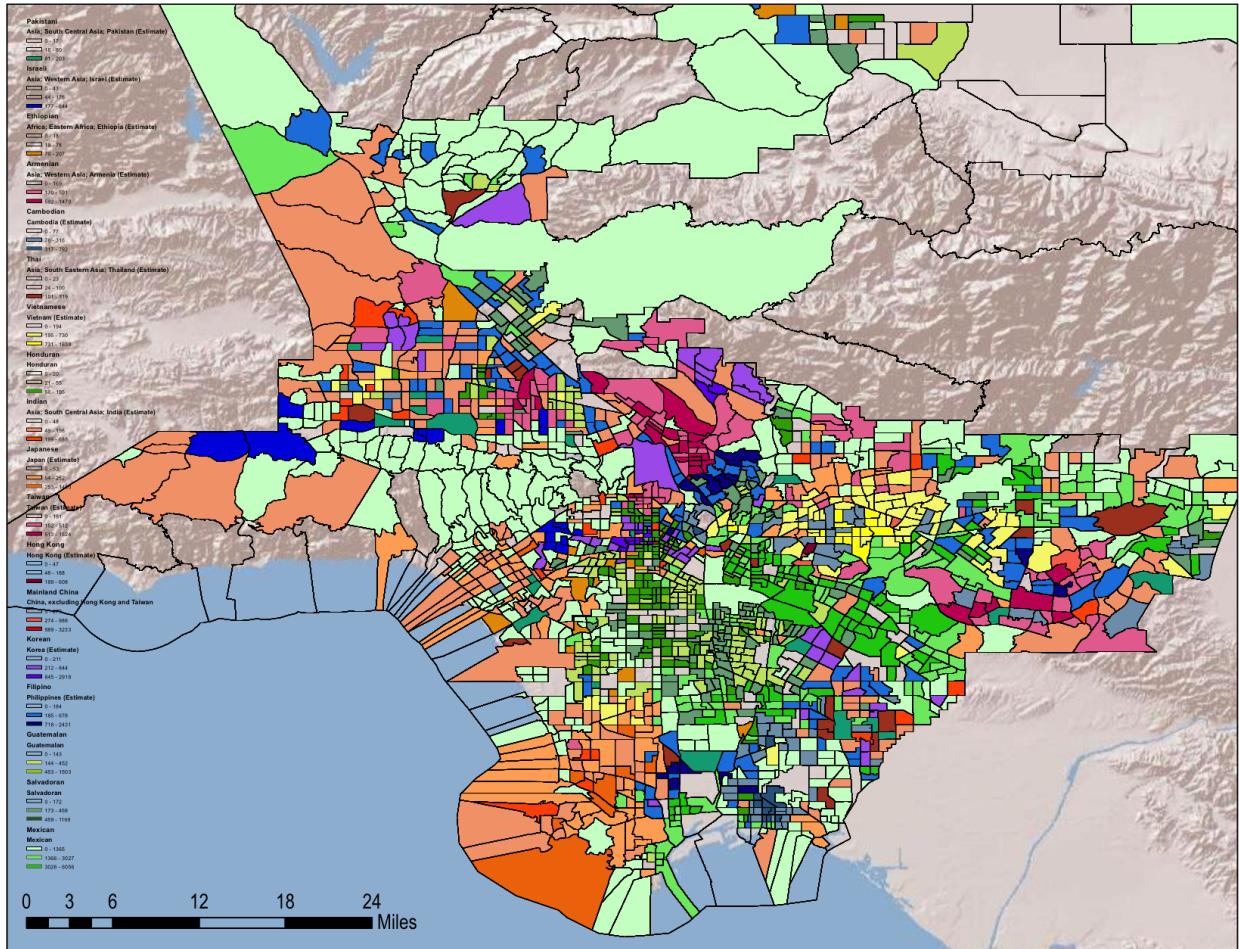


Figure 2: American Communities Survey 2009, Foreign-Born Populations, by Tract. Image by Author. The densest group is foregrounded.

which was the hotbed of Korean immigrants in the 1980s and 90s, is quickly being taken over by its even more rapidly expanding neighbor, Little Saigon.

Since the 2000 Census, Los Angeles County has grown by 3.1%. The southern California region has grown about 3.7%, compared to California's increase of 10.0%. As the region continues to grow, it will face challenges of growth because of its limited resources, especially water and mobility. From this point onward, rather than expanding outward, the region needs to densify. The governments and the people of southern California are aware of this problem. With the passing of Measure R in 2008, they are acknowledging that further sprawl and construction of freeways is not the way forward, and that the region must densify and diversify its mobility options to meet the needs of the 13 million people estimated to be living in the county by 2030.

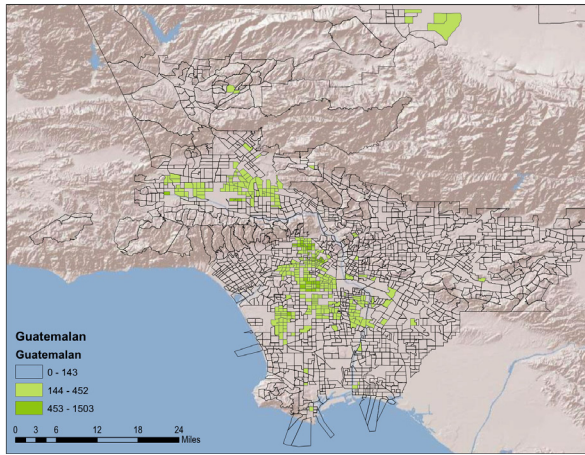


Figure 3: Guatamalan population

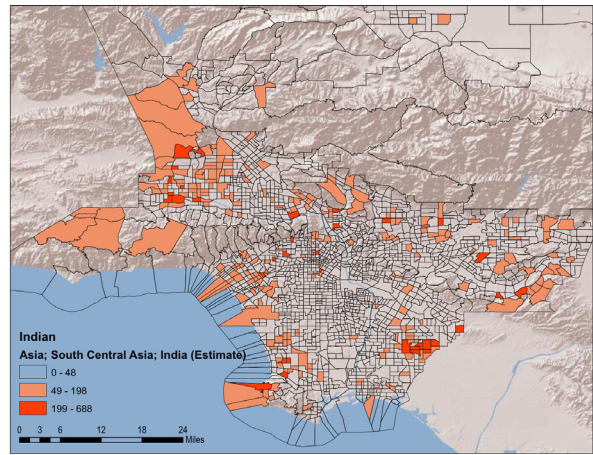


Figure 4: Indian population

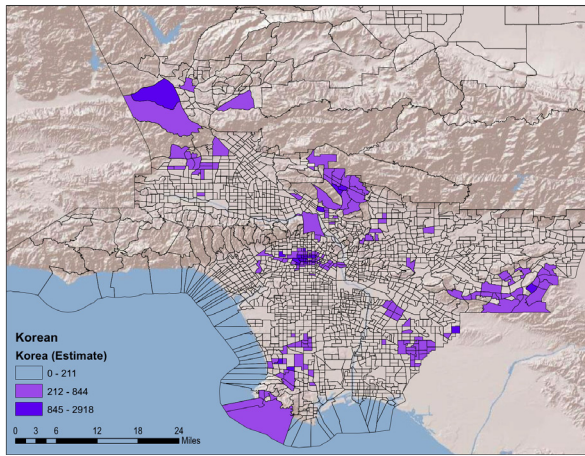


Figure 6: Korean population

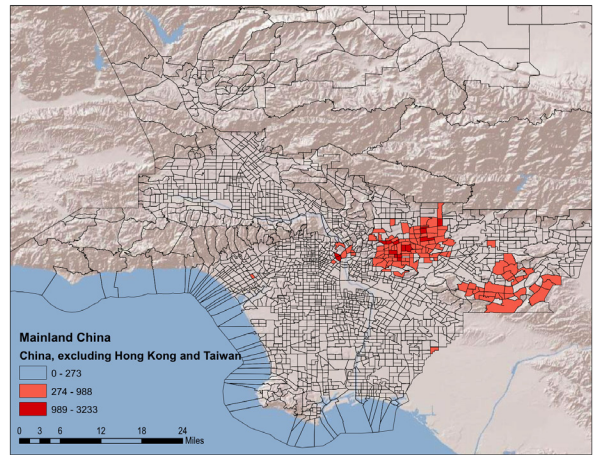


Figure 5: Mainland Chinese Population

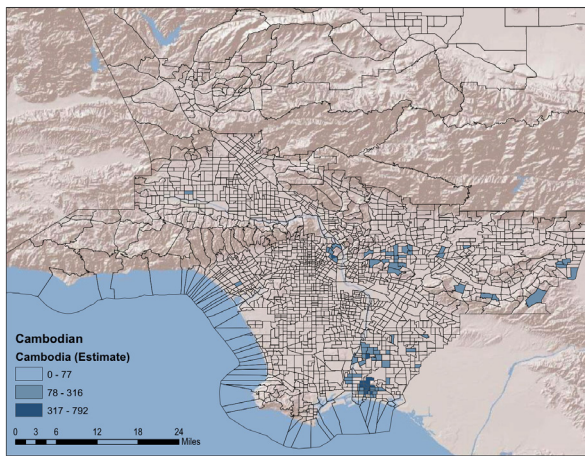


Figure 7: Cambodian population

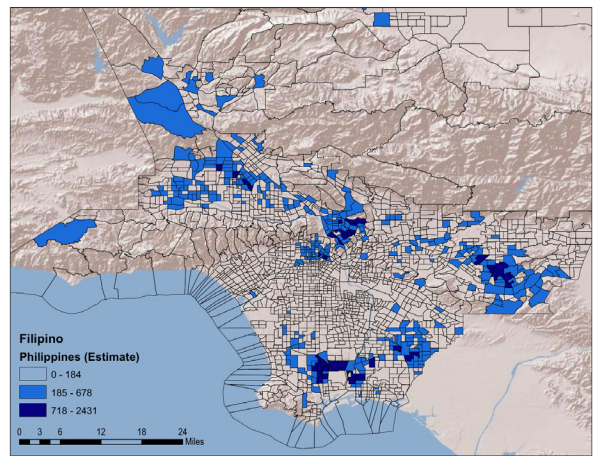


Figure 8: Filipino population

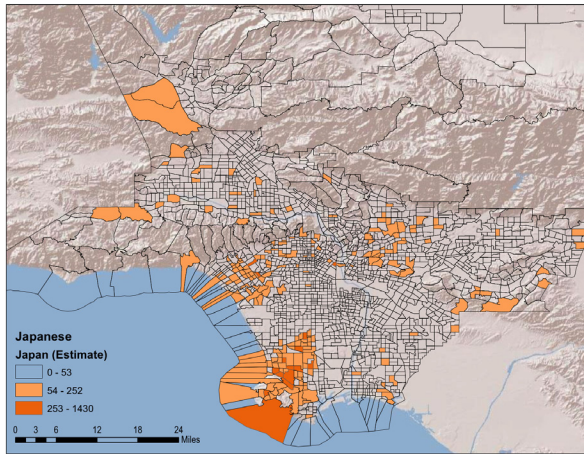


Figure 9: Japanese population

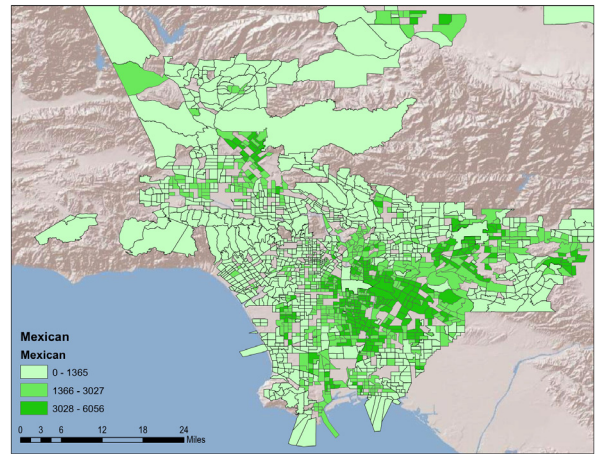


Figure 10: Mexican population

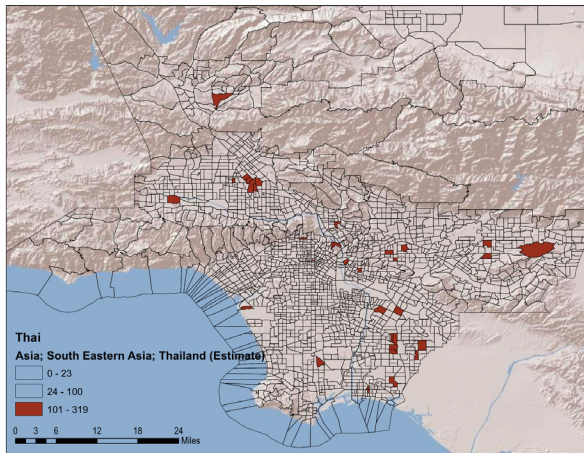


Figure 12: Thai population

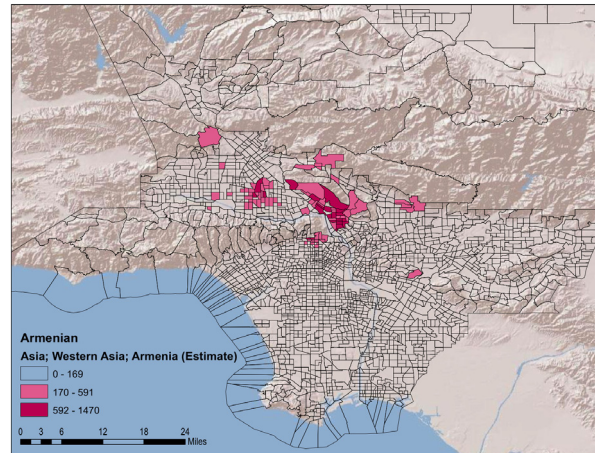


Figure 11: Armenian population

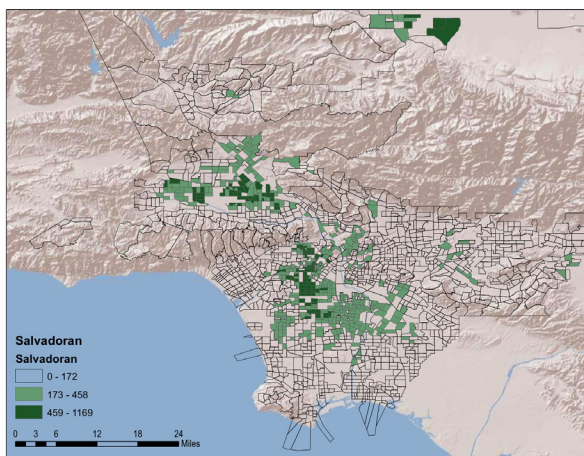


Figure 13: Salvadoran population

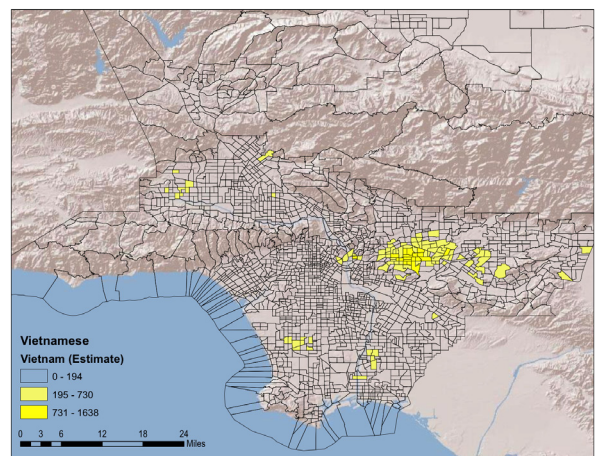


Figure 14: Vietnamese population

L.A.'s Built Form

Considering this vast heterotopic region, Los Angeles as an urban entity is complicated for many reasons. While it is undeniably a major metropolis of large size, diverse economy, and financial-political-cultural influence, there is nonetheless something quintessentially un-urban about Los Angeles from an architectural and urbanistic viewpoint. Los Angeles is a city that lacks a fundamental urban ethos, as reflected in its spatial organization and formal characteristics. They reflect a fundamentally un-urban aversion to rubbing up against difference.

The identities of Angelenos are not that of the larger metropolitan Los Angeles region, but those of the smaller cities and neighborhoods that compose it. In fact, many of these cities came into being precisely in order to define itself against a demographic notion of the 'other': specifically the poorer, immigrant neighbors. One could argue that this is not a condition unique to Los Angeles, and that aversion to difference is a basic characteristic that is present to some degree in all cities. One could argue that this resistance is precisely what creates unique and special districts, adding to the overall diversity of the city. However, in Los Angeles it produces a specific urban landscape that is perhaps not unique but certainly legible in the form of Los Angeles, at the scale of its various cities, its vast network of suburban communities.

As Mike Davis writes, “The emergence of suburban Southern California as a ‘metrosea’ of fragmented and insular local sovereignties – often depicted in urbanist literature as an ‘accident’ of unplanned growth—was in fact the result of deliberate shaping,”² at the scale of the homeowner. Davis describes a movement led by Homeowners Associations (HA), whose “overriding purpose was to ensure social and racial homogeneity,”³ openly practiced until the 1948 ruling by the Supreme Court against restrictive covenants, and later through various methods of exclusionary politics. Davis links the tool of governmentality that allowed or begot the emergence of these various exclusively-defined cities in the years following the Korean War to a very simple governmental policy: L.A. County began allowing cities to contract out municipal services. This prompted what he calls the “Lakewoodization” of the region, the incorporations of smaller and socially homogenous cities, like Lakewood, seceding out of larger, poorer cities, like the City of Long Beach, leading to a socio-economic and cultural differentiation of the region and a general homogeneity in these parts. Davis asserts that this law provided an “escape hatch from ordinary municipal citizenship”⁴ by giving the city the ability to “zone out service-demanding low-income and renting populations, eliminate (through service contracting) homegrown union or bureaucratic pressures for service expansion, and, perhaps most importantly, safeguard their property from potential utilization as a resource for government expansion or fiscal redistribution.”⁵ In what Davis calls a practice of “homestead exclusivism,” these homeowners leverage their defense of home value to protest against “apartment construction, commercial encroachment, school busing, crime, taxes or simply community designation”⁶ to distinguish and protect a particular identity and homogenous community.

2 Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1996), 164.

3 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 161.

4 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 166.

5 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 166.

6 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 159.



Figure 15: Fabric of Lakewood. Image from Google Maps (Accessed Nov 2011).



Figure 16: Fabric of Long Beach. Image from Google Maps (Accessed Nov 2011).

These “separatist struggles” and exclusionary identities, based on the capitalistic right to protect home values and lifestyles (like the ‘horse-oriented community’ of La Habra Heights⁷), had a distinct agenda pertaining not only to property values, but also specifically to class and race. This is clearly manifest through architectural typologies—the single-family house versus the multi-family apartment housing, or the auto-privileged suburban neighborhood unit versus mixed-use areas. Even within already exclusive enclaves, like the wealthy Palos Verdes peninsula north of Long Beach, space is further differentiated into strata of economic hierarchy, from the wealthy Rolling Hills Estates to the more middle-class San Pedro Hills. In these cases, the citizens of each secessionist/exclusive city points to architectural typology as an important factor reflecting their desired lifestyles and social values, the architectural banner for their various exclusionary identities. Using slogans against multi-family housing units (for them, where the welfare-recipient criminals fester), they defend their architectural suburban ideal to assert an identity separate from their poorer, often immigrant, neighbors. Using zoning, bedroom ordinances, and minimum lot size restrictions, they effectively use architectural form and prescriptions about its use to self-monitor the desired population within their borders.

This defense is not only against the poor, but also against different races and cultures. For example, Davis describes how in Monterrey, a suburban area that became the hotbed of middle-class Chinese immigrant community in the 1970’s, the homeowners initially tried to defend their neighborhood from these wealthy foreigners through bedroom ordinances, which restricted how many people may live in the property. It was an attack against non-nuclear family structures, such as those favored by immigrants from more extended-family cultures, to zone out not just those who could not afford the area, but who did not share their manners or habits of living – in other words, culture.

Davis describes the result of these various strategies of citizens exerting spatial control:

These myriad local manipulations of the ‘exit option’ by homeowners’ groups and business cliques have generated the current nonsense-jigsaw map of Southern California. One consequence of this ongoing process... has been the extension of residential segregation across a vast metropolitan space ... ‘Lakewoodism’, combined with a widening homeownership gap since the 1960s, has also accelerated the sorting out of the county’s population between zones of single-family homeowners (the majority in low-tax rate

7 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 167.

minimal cities) and renters (the increasing majority in higher-tax older cities).⁸

In this sense, the form and spatial organization of the region and its pattern understood as artifacts resulting from the desire to define oneself against the other, with very concrete financial, social, and cultural motivations, in Los Angeles.

Furthermore, sprawl itself is the formal manifestation of the aversion to the idea of the urban itself. Los Angeles is a city of low-density, horizontal growth, because it grew as people fled from “the city” for the latest iteration of the ideal suburb and way of life, promising an escape from the dangers and unpleasantness of the city. In this sense, it is a city that does not want to be a city. Its icon is the freeway, the very infrastructure that symbolizes getting *away* from the city, the product of a federal level form of governmentality, the National Interstate and Defense Highway Act of 1956 under President Eisenhower. Potently, it is an infrastructure for national defense, the infrastructure to get the population *out* of densely populated areas in case of nuclear attack. In its early period of growth, Los Angeles’ very selling point was its offering of a city different from east coast and Midwestern metropolises, a position against the “great cities” in favor of “dispersed, low density communities,”⁹ or a “city in a garden.”¹⁰

8 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 168.

9 Martin Wachs, “The Evolution of Transportation Policy in Los Angeles: Images of Past Policies and Future Prospects,” *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Allen Scott, Edward Soja. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 119.

10 Wachs, “The Evolution of Transportation Policy in Los Angeles,” 110.

L.A.'s Urban Center

If Los Angeles is thus such an agglomeration of independent parts, of homogenous enclaves, its center, or downtown, merits some consideration as an entity in relation to the region's urban identity. Los Angeles' core cannot be understood using the Chicago School radial model, with an industrial core and radiating zones of wealth and poverty around it, because Los Angeles never fit the mold of the nineteenth-century industrial city, with a condensed manufacturing center. Today, only 5% of the region's jobs are downtown. Nonetheless, even during the period of nation-wide industrial decline, L.A.'s core never lost population because even as it emptied of its domestic black and white populations, incoming immigrants more than replaced them, at a faster rate.¹¹

Some argue that Los Angeles has multiple competing "centers," reflecting the hegemonic real estate gambles of a few families, like the Westside Hancock Park area (with LACMA and the tar pits). But the "center" I refer to is very real and uncontested, as the transportation, institutional, financial, political, and to some extent the cultural center. It is the area immediately in and around Bunker Hill in Downtown L.A. This is the physical concentration of networks that make Los Angeles a global city, such as finance, communications, and governance. Bounded by the I-5, the historic 101, and the 110 Harbor Freeway, this area concentrates the characteristics of the global city in an area approximately 4 square miles big, as a microcosm of the city itself. In addition to the One Wilshire Blvd, the building with the highest commercial cost per square foot in the U.S. because of the physical convergence of fiber-optic lines from across the Pacific Ocean, the area hosts the historic Broadway district, the redeveloped Bunker Hill (the corporate center), the Staples Center (sports), the Nokia Theater (entertainment), and the Civic Center (governance). This area is surrounded by what Edward Soja calls "a deceptively harmonized showcase of ethni-cities and specialized economic enclaves,"¹² like Chinatown, Little Tokyo, El Pueblo, Boyle Heights, Koreatown, Historic Filipinotown, Little Armenia, etc.... a series of "Foucauldian heterotopias 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible' but 'function in relation to all the space that remains.'"¹³

Matthew Coolidge, director of the Center for Land Use and Interpretation, remarks:

Downtown, though, is more of a backdrop, like behind the desk on a talk show. **It is an illusion of an identity**, very different from other cities that do seem to have a core. That skyline is a symbol an agglomeration of glass and steel that formed in the eddy of the I-10, I-110, I-101, and I-5 freeways. It means something else entirely to the people that are here. I think the city is actually everything and everywhere else.¹⁴

Coolidge hits the nail on the head: the urban center of Los Angeles is a void into which different groups project a different image, meaning, and desire. In this description, the emptiness, or lack of character, of the center of Los Angeles is only fitting for a city composed of such a disjunction and jumble of identities. For Davis, however, this center is less benign. Davis calls downtown with its contemporary iconic works of

11 Maltzan, *No More Play*, 147.

12 Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 239.

13 Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 240.

14 Maltzan, *No More Play*, 99, emphasis mine.



Figure 17: Corporate fortresses of Bunker Hill



Figure 18: The Broadway District east of Bunker Hill

architecture by famous architects an empty show of “corporate multiculturalism,” which suck attention and money from the authentic culture produced in the periphery.¹⁵ Soja agrees: “It has created an enormous market for star architects and given license to all that city marketing and city branding. This process draws money away from deepening and worsening social problems, so you get a terrible vicious circle that is absorbing architects and architecture in very powerful ways.”¹⁶ Again, architecture and form are tools of oppression, a sort of misdirection to create a veneer of urbanity without the substance of it. These iconic buildings, rather than providing real spaces of civic participation and identity, are a technique of city-branding, giving substantiation to the argument that space and form are irrelevant to the practice of urban citizenship, and that the preoccupation with forms is misguided in the discourse about identity.

But that is not all. Davis takes this argument further, dissecting the insidious ways in which the redevelopment of the Bunker Hill constitutes a deliberate “fortress” that “polic[es] social boundaries through architecture.”¹⁷ He writes, “In cities like Los Angeles, on the hard edge of post-modernity, architecture and the police apparatus are being merged to an unprecedented degree.”¹⁸ Redeveloped in 1955 as part of the urban renewal project, Bunker Hill was yet another violent erasure of urban fabric in a naïve attempt to combat larger socio-economic problems. Victorian homes were razed, and the Bunker Hill area was redesigned as a corporate fortress, with its back turned against the Broadway district deemed unsalvageable by planners. So, in what Davis calls a strategy of “double repression,” the design both erases the memory as a denial of its history, and prevents any future association with that district of undesirable otherness, a Latino district, through such techniques as the removal of pedestrian access, steep grading, deployment of security guards, and inhospitable design of public spaces. These are strategies for limiting spatial interaction, to ensure a one-way infiltration: one could possibly descend to the Broadway district from the Hill, but not the other way around. In this scenario, the presence of the public transportation system was a major factor in why that area was deemed so unpalatable and ultimately unsalvageable for urban planners. Davis writes, “Downtown Los Angeles’ redevelopers considered property values in the old Broadway core as irreversibly eroded by the **area’s status as the hub of public transportation primarily**

15 Davis, *City of Quartz*, 81.

16 Maltzan, *No More Play*, 148.

17 Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles” in *American Urban Politics in a Global Age: The Reader*. Fifth edition. Paul Kantor & Dennis R. Judd, ed. (New York: Pearson Education, 2008), 253.

18 Davis, “Fortress,” 254.

used by black and Mexican poor.¹⁹ In this sense, the “fortress effect” evident in the design of L.A.’s center is an **“an explicit—and, in its own terms, successful—socio-spatial strategy.”**²⁰

This strategy is, according to Davis, “only one local expression of the national movement toward ‘defensible’ urban centers. Cities of all sizes are rushing to apply and profit from a formula that links together clustered development, social homogeneity, and a perception of security.”²¹ The sequestering of the poor in Skid Row and in immigrant neighborhoods and hangouts signals the spatial polarization of the city, divided into “‘fortified cells’ of affluence and ‘places of terror’ where police battle the criminalized poor.”²²

19 Davis, “Fortress,” 256, emphasis mine.

20 Davis, “Fortress,” 256, emphasis mine.

21 Davis, “Fortress,” 257.

22 Davis, “Fortress,” 254.

The Technopolitics of L.A.'S Transportation System

This socio-spatial strategy to control population in relation to territory exists at the regional level in the region's transportation system. The freeway may be the most universally experienced space in the region, but it is in no way a democratic space. It is the most heavily subsidized and funded piece of transportation infrastructure in the region to which a significant portion of the population has no or limited access: those who cannot afford or use cars. A vast underclass of minorities, the poor, and the elderly are dependent on the public transportation system for movement.

Today, about 10% of daily journeys made in the region are through the public transportation system. The Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (the L.A. Metro) is the Los Angeles region's primary mass transportation provider, and a behemoth of an employer, with 9,200 employees. Its operating area is 1,433 mi². It is the third largest public transportation system in the United States, after New York and Chicago, in terms of passenger trips, and as an urbanized area actually ranks above Chicago in terms of passenger miles and population.²³ The L.A. Metro owns and operates the largest fleet of buses serving the largest service area in the country. The City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) operates Commuter Express bus service to outlying suburbs, and Downtown Area Short Hop (DASH) offers mini-bus service in Downtown L.A. and other "centers" in the region. The Metro itself operates four types of services: the local bus (local, rapid, and express), rapid bus (BRT, also called the Metro Liner), the subway, and the regional light rail (Metrolink), and possibly a future high-speed rail through the state of California. L.A. Metro is aggressive in its pursuit of federal funding, forming proposals like America Fast Forward in partnership with various local governments and groups like Move LA, the Chamber of Commerce, and the AFLCIO. Recently, the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles Antonio Villaraigosa was lobbying in Washington D.C. for federal funds for the rail expansion with the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act.²⁴

Governmentality in Los Angeles

Focusing on the L.A. Metro, it is useful to re-examine the concept of governmentality. The agency is an instrument of governmentality, a part of what Foucault defines as "[t]he ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security."²⁵ To explicate further along these terms, the L.A. Metro is concerned with allocation of the population over the vast Southern California territory, with the pattern and speed of movement of the various groups that inhabit that territory, and their levels of access to different places, their respective speeds, and their relationship to spaces of production and consumption. In this sense, the institution controlling these variables is ultimately a part of the coding of social relationships and power.

23 American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *2011 Public Transportation Fact Book*, 62nd Edition, available at <http://www.apta.com/> (Accessed 9 Dec 2011), 8-9.

24 Anne Mulkern, "Los Angeles Leads Full Throttle Dash for U.S. Transit Cash." *New York Times Online*, June 6, 2011, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2011/06/06/06greenwire-los-angeles-leads-full-throttle-dash-for-us-tran-379.html?pagewanted=all> (Accessed 9 May 2012).

25 Foucault, *Power*, 219-220.

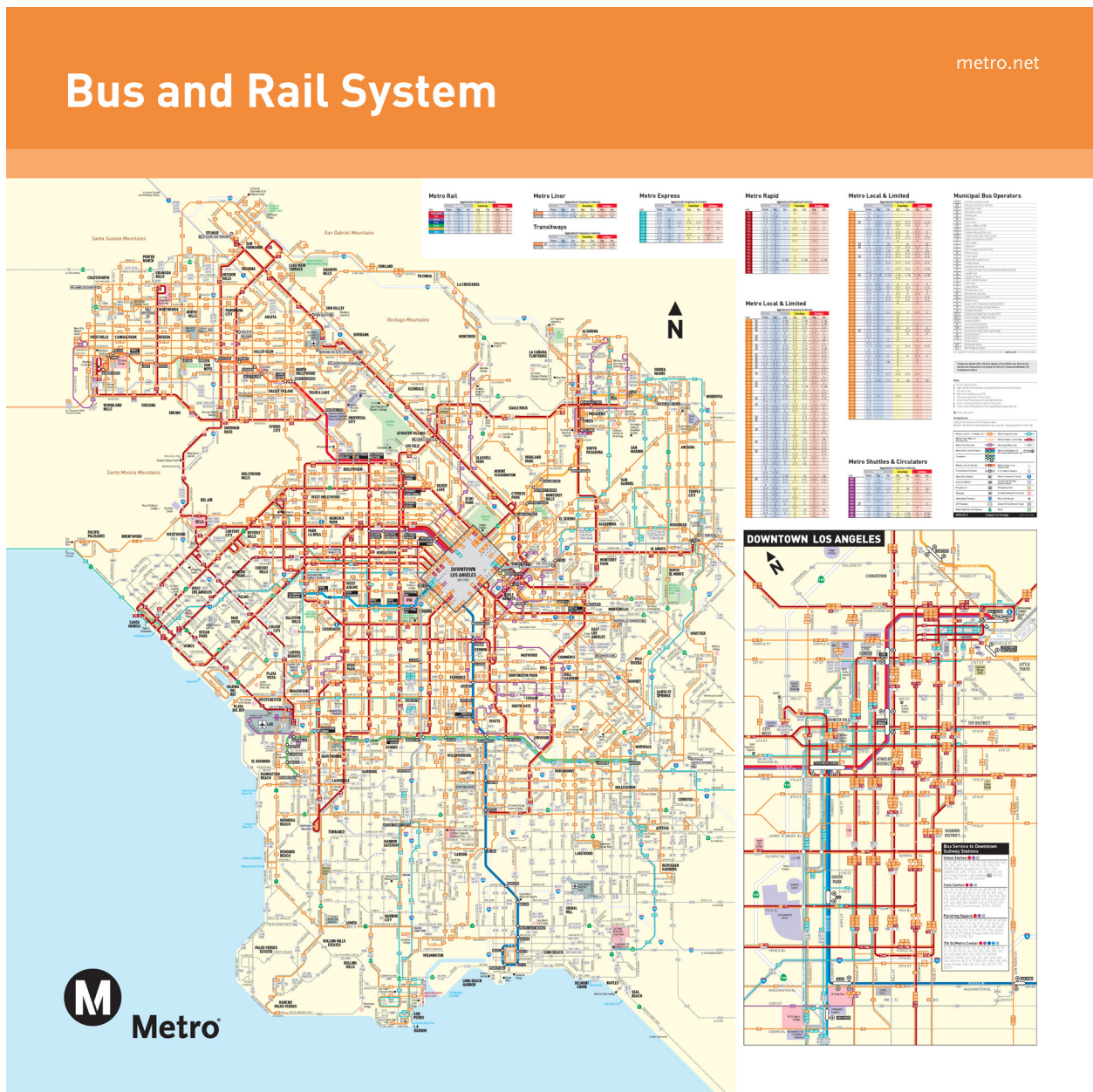
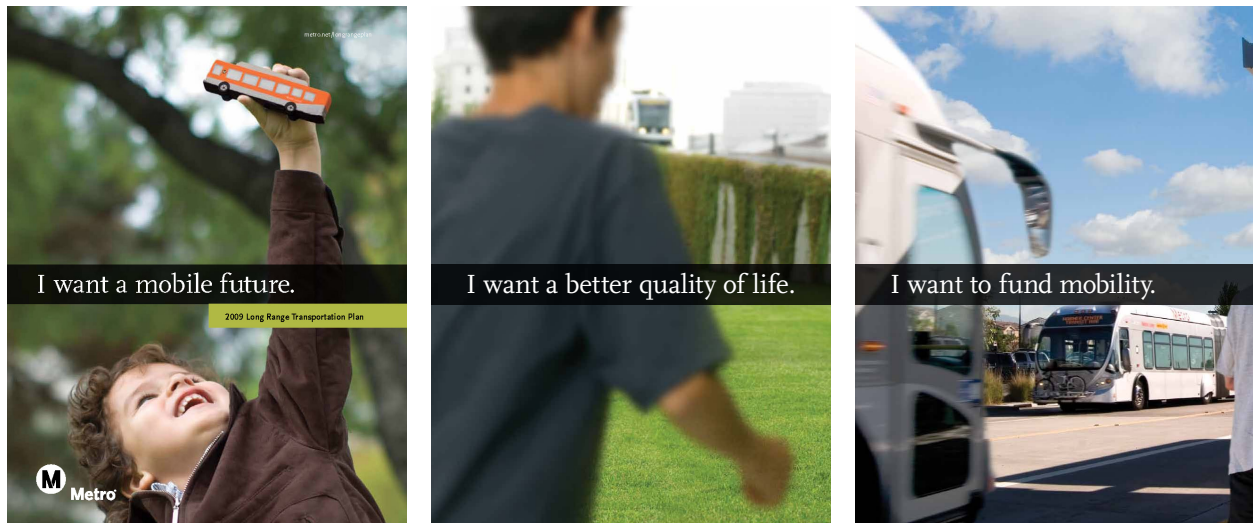


Figure 19: Transportation map of Los Angeles. Image from L.A. Metro. (Accessed 11 Nov 2011).

The transportation infrastructure is thus an object to be calibrated, cajoled, and policed for the “common good”—the continued economic productivity and “livability” of the region, particularly with regard to ease of access and to mobility. As such, the transportation system’s procedures and analyses, its calculations and tactics, reveal both the biases and potentials of the organization for a socio-economic agenda, as defined by planners,

However, the transportation system is more than that. It is also a key terrain of contestation, as the institution and system that allows, or in many cases, denies mobility in Los Angeles. This is what constitutes the Lefebvrian “right to the city” in Los Angeles. Unlike cities with actual “centers” of



Images from the L.A. Metro 2009 Long Range Transportation Plan.

employment and power, in decentralized and dispersed Los Angeles the issue of mobility is key, as a commodity and a right that is even more critical for access to livelihood and to freedom of movement. This is seen in the legal challenges by organizations like the Bus Riders Union, who seek a right to Los Angeles for the poor and immigrant constituency, and in tussles over planning of metro stops in newly planned lines.

Currently, the L.A. Metro is aggressively transforming mobility in the region. Faced with a growth of 3 million in population over the next 30 years, the L.A. Metro, as well as other governmental agencies such as the Southern California Association of Governments, have put out proposals for how to deal with mobility in this perpetually congested automobile city. In its \$300 million Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), issued in 2009, L.A. Metro proposes new initiatives to encourage less automobile usage, through such measures as adding carpool lanes (HOV), creating toll-based high occupancy lanes (HOT), offering incentives for rideshares and “flex-schedules and home offices,” and venturing into “smart growth” and transit-oriented development.²⁶ It is also proposing expansions and upgrades to its bus fleet, including “smart” or high-tech buses with less environmental impact and dedicated bus lanes, and an expansion of the rail system as well. The Expo line connecting Downtown L.A. to Santa Monica is under construction.

Thus, the L.A. Metro is a public Authority that is concerned with controlling not just the physical and operational infrastructure itself, but precisely “territory, communication, and speed,”²⁷ the variables of governmentality. It seeks to re-order the **pattern of settlement of territory** via its ventures into development (smart- and transit-oriented developments). It seeks a more comprehensive **coordination of communication**, dependent on high-level network technology and communication devices (via its Transportation Demand Management and Transportation System Management systems, and their coordination with “smart” buses and other nodes of intelligent infrastructure). And it **commodifies the variable of speed**, through hierarchizing freeway lanes and controlling access with such devices as

26 L.A. Metro, *2009 Long Range Transportation Plan*, available at <http://www.metro.net/projects/reports/> (Accessed 17 Nov 2011), 21.

27 Foucault, *Power*, 354.

congestion pricing and toll lanes, in which all cars are required to have a transponder,²⁸ or receive its mark, in order to participate in the system. This will add another level of differentiation of bodies, between those who can afford congestion pricing and those who cannot. But that is not all. The Plan also seeks to influence patterns and habits of living, or “lifestyles,” through programs that partner with employers and commercial culture to promote and encourage “flex-schedules” and home offices. In this way, the Plan is itself a comprehensive apparatus of governmentality.

This ambitious plan depends primarily on local funds (voter initiatives Propositions A, C, and Measure R, a sort of self-governing by voting to tax oneself), but it is also heavily dependent on federal and state funding.²⁹ The “30/10 Projects,” which will accomplish “30 years’ worth of transit projects in just 10 years,”³⁰ are funded by Transit Improvement Bonds, the Federal Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), and Early Systems Work Agreement (ESWA) with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). These include both highway improvements as well as mass transit projects. Recently, the Federal Transit Administration’s Bus Livability, Alternatives Analysis and State of Good Repair programs awarded the L.A. Metro the biggest share of the \$126 million given to the State of California, including \$25 million for new buses that run on compressed natural gas. Also aided by federal funding is the much-touted high speed rail with the California High-Speed Rail Authority, with some \$8 billion financed by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that for now proposes to connect Los Angeles and Orange County in 20 minutes.³¹ According to the LRTP, the biggest portion of these funds is allocated for bus capital and operations, next for highway and street improvements.³² It claims, “While all income groups benefit by improved transit access, low-income residents in Los Angeles County are expected to benefit most from increased transit use.”³³

Bus vs. Rail : A Ground of Contestation

According to Edward Soja, “[t]ransportation in Los Angeles, whether we are speaking of freeways, railways, or buses, has always been highly politicized, and never more so than today.”³⁴ Each mode of transport is tied to a specific socio-economic constituency. The majority of L.A. Metro users are Latino at 58%, followed by Black at 19%. Asians and White compose 9% each. (To give some context, the racial breakdown of Los Angeles County is as follows: 47.7% Hispanic, 27.8% Non-Hispanic White, 8.7% Black, 0.7% Native Indian, 13.7% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander, 21.8% other, 4.5% two or more, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.) The majority of Metro users are lower-income: 69% of riders earn \$26,000 or less, annually. These bus riders often have no alternative mode of transport.

In 1994, in response to the Metro spending \$30 billion on rail infrastructure while raising bus fares, the Bus Riders Union, organized by the Labor/Community Strategy Center, successfully sued the L.A. Metro,

28 L.A. Metro, *2009 LRTP*, 27.

29 L.A. Metro, *2009 LRTP*, 22.

30 L.A. Metro, “30/10 Initiative,” available at: <http://www.metro.net/projects/30-10/> (Accessed Nov 2011).

31 L.A. Metro, “High-Speed Rail Interactive,” available at: <http://www.metro.net/interactives/highspeedrail/> (Accessed Nov 2011).

32 L.A. Metro, *2009 LRTP*, 23.

33 L.A. Metro, *2009 LRTP*, 54.

34 Maltzan, *No More Play*, 150.

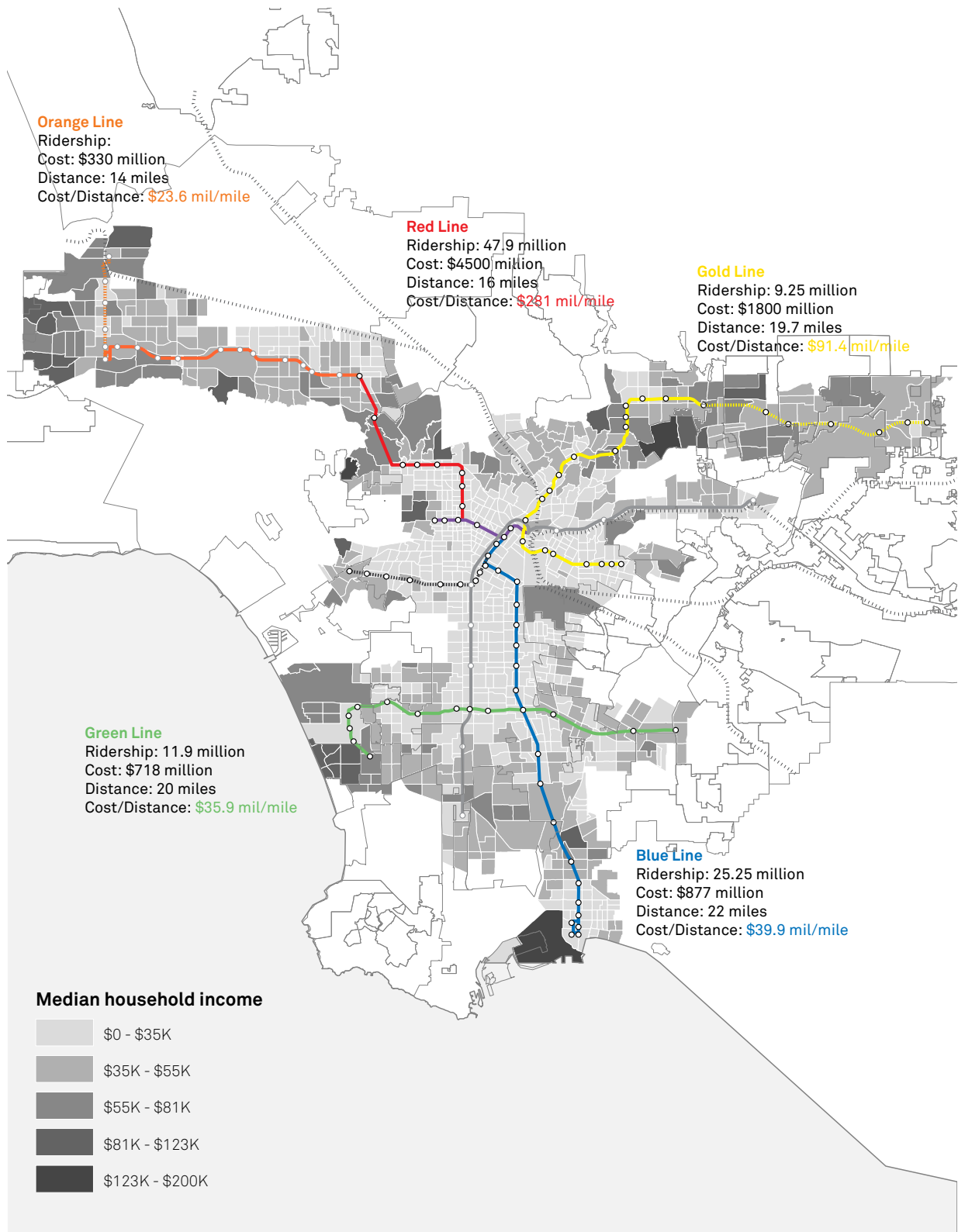


Figure 20: Analysis of areas near the Metro rail lines in L.A. County. Image by author, with information from <http://www.metro.net/news/ridership-statistics/> (Accessed 11 Nov 2011).

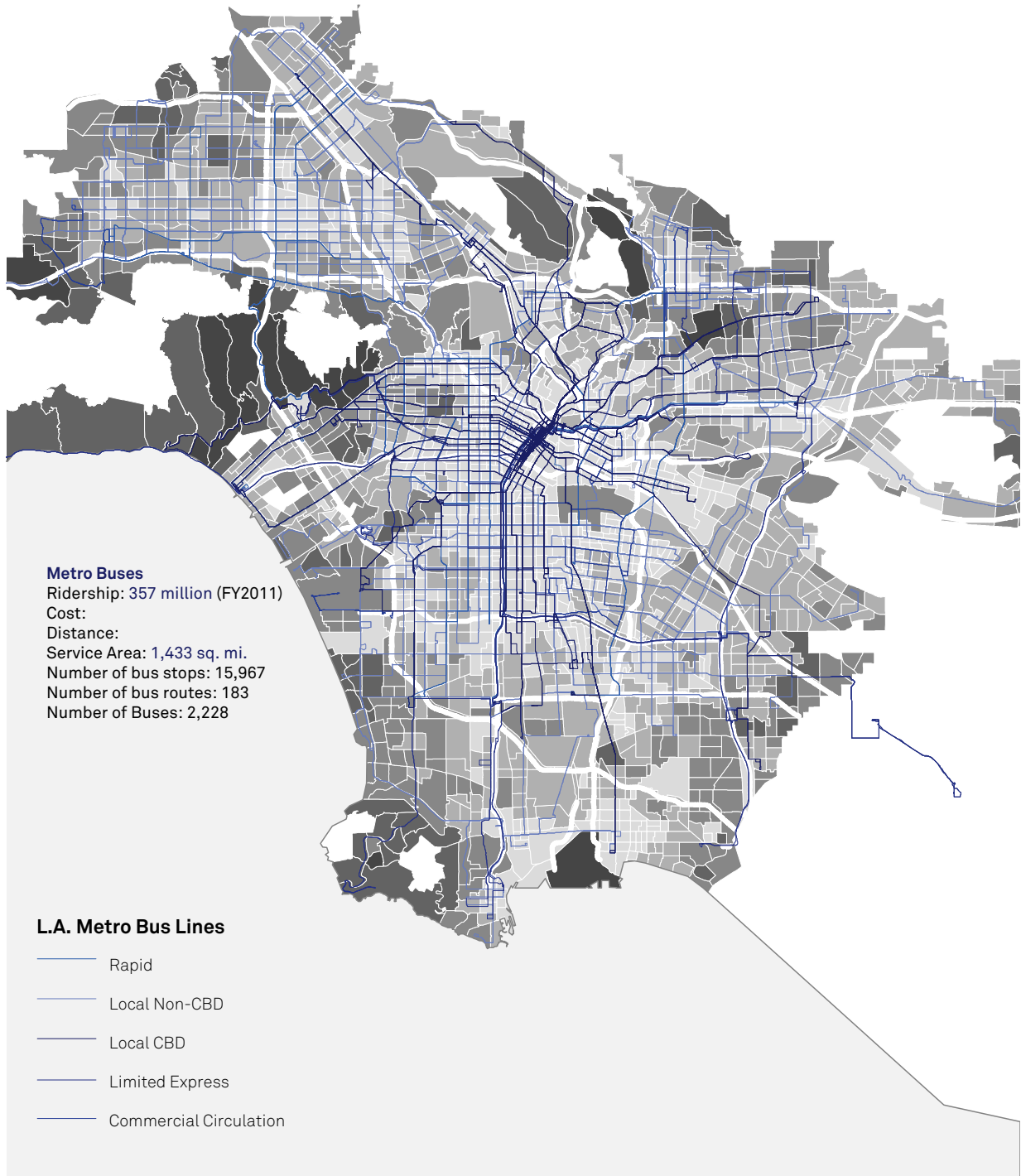


Figure 21: Analysis of areas served by Bus lines in L.A. County. Image by author, with information from <http://www.metro.net/news/ridership-statistics/> (Accessed 11 Nov 2011).

arguing that rail improvements benefit the suburban middle-class (already well served by freeways) and is thus discriminatory against the inner city population of the working poor, who cannot afford cars and thus depend on buses.³⁵ It argued that improvements on the bus system would be far more beneficial to a far larger and far needier population. The union and several other activist groups at what was billed as a “transit justice town hall,” accused the county transportation agency of hurting poor riders by aggressively pursuing new rail projects while slashing bus service. The groups say the cuts unfairly hurt low-income, nonwhite residents and insist that bus service needs to be expanded.”³⁶ For them, the Metro’s aggressive focus on rail infrastructure is tied to its attempt to court the middle-class, and to its contribution to neighborhood gentrification, even as the actual Metro users, i.e. bus riders, subsidized this ambitious expansion program.

Thus, the system itself is a kind of ground, terrain, and space of contestation—a clear example of what Sassen has described as the ground of contestation emerging from the conflicts over the changing notion of citizenship in global cities. This system itself is the site where the struggle to gain access to the city is occurring in contemporary Los Angeles. The marginalized poor and immigrant in Los Angeles are mobilizing to fight for equal access and treatment within the transportation system.

While the L.A. Metro capitalizes on its technological and “green” merits on one hand, it is also often criticized for its slow and unreliable service, which also costs more compared to the more heavily subsidized rail system. Service, in the end, is the real point of contestation. This is clear when one inspects the breakdown of allocation of funds to bus. While it is scheduled to receive the largest portion of the budget, at \$101.9 million over the next 30 years, \$83.1 million of that is operational, versus \$18.8 million capital. As soon as forecasted funds are not met, it is easy to guess that the first thing to be cut are operational costs, in the form of service cuts.

For Berkeley transportation engineer Martin Wachs, investing money in the light rail is throwing money at middle class people who have other options. According to Wachs, no matter how much money is invested in the light rail system it will continue to be ineffective because as can be expected with L.A.’s low and moderate density, only 5% of the workforce work where these rail lines converge, in Downtown L.A. In addition, the system was not built based on greatest avenues of need, but on existing and available rails discarded from an earlier era, which are not today corridors of heavy traffic. In addition, because of the cheap gas prices in the United States, it is still cheaper to park for free than to buy a monthly rail pass for most commuters. Lastly, people do not just go between the workplace and home, but need to attend to other everyday chores, so it is unrealistic and inconvenient for people to take the train instead of their cars.³⁷ He writes,

the financial resources expended on the rail network are providing dramatic improvements in expensive transit service for a relatively small number of suburban middle- and upper-income commuters. Alternative uses of the funds, however, could provide a much larger quantity of less expensive service for lower-income inner-city

35 Maltzan, *No More Play*, 151.

36 Ari Bloomekatz, “L.A. transit activists rally for a federal probe,” *Los Angeles Times Online*, August 21, 2011, available at <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/aug/21/local/la-me-stranded-20110821> (Accessed 9 Dec 2011).

37 Wachs, “The Evolution of Transportation Policy in Los Angeles,” 141-142.

dweller who are far more dependent on public transit and who use the service regularly.³⁸

In this sense, the investments into each different modes of transportation reflect political agenda, and are tied to the general issues of citizenship and access. As it now stands, the transportation system is itself a tool and a perpetrator of further socioeconomic polarization, as an apparatus that reflects, reinforces, and exacerbates existing social divisions, effectively subsidizing the rich, who do not need to use the system, while taxing the poor, who are dependent on the system.

L.A. Metro's Venture into Urban Development

So how does the L.A. Metro justify its bias toward the rail, in a dispersed and vast territory without the dense commuter destinations and dense residential neighborhoods that would make the rail system plausible? The L.A. Metro's solution to this fundamental problem is, rather than embracing the reality of the sprawl, to create a new population that adheres to its format. Just as rail barons did in the nineteenth century, the L.A. Metro is seeking to conjure up the population to justify its infrastructure. Through Joint Development Programs (JDP), the L.A. Metro partners with private investors and developers to create new "smart growth" cities along its rail lines, including high end hotels and luxury housing projects geared to appeal to the "urbanite" consumer.

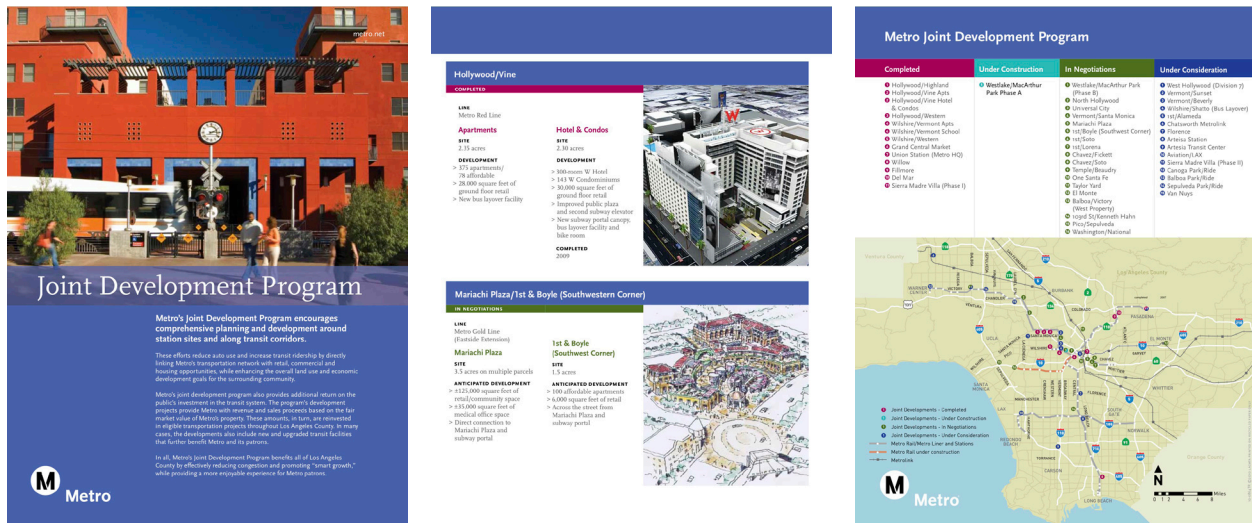


Figure 22: Pages from the Joint Development Program brochure. Images from L.A. Metro.

According to its brochure, “Metro’s Joint Development Program encourages comprehensive planning and development around station sites and along transit corridors.”³⁹ By building integrated commercial space, retail, and housing along the transportation network, the JDP creates a captive customer base for its system, “while enhancing the overall land use and economic development goals for the surrounding community.”⁴⁰ The

38 Wachs, “The Evolution of Transportation Policy in Los Angeles,” 142.

39 L.A. Metro, “Joint Development Program Brochure,” 2010, available at http://www.metro.net/projects/joint_dev_pgm/ (Accessed 30 Nov 2011).

40 L.A. Metro, “Joint Development Program Brochure.”

brochure claims:

Metro's joint development program also provides additional return on the public's investment in the transit system. The program's development projects provide Metro with revenue and sales proceeds based on the fair market value of Metro's property. These amounts, in turn, are reinvested in eligible transportation projects throughout Los Angeles County. In many cases, the developments also include new and upgraded transit facilities that further benefit Metro and its patrons...

In all, Metro's Joint Development Program benefits all of Los Angeles County by effectively reducing congestion and promoting "smart growth," while providing a more enjoyable experience for Metro patrons.⁴¹

This coordination of transportation infrastructure with the pattern of occupation of territory by the population is a larger, more invisible, and more total mechanism of control. It inserts within the existing city an urban pattern more sympathetic to density and the use (consumption) of its technologies. Today, it is not private rail companies acting synergistically with sister real estate developments, but a public institution, an Authority, that is venturing into urban development, albeit through public-private partnerships. At this point, it is even more pressing and necessary to examine the Authority's conception of the public good.

Theoretically, this could be a step in the right direction – the creation a more diverse housing stock for the region, offering viable alternative lifestyles and mobility – but *only if* there were an aggressive focus on providing a fair share of affordable housing for the underserved lower class, the MTA's existing and truest clientele. One can imagine that by concentrating especially low-income housing along a transit service (that is itself also adequately affordable), and connecting them to a variety of retail and commercial operations, the city might well take on a more diverse, robust format of growth, with sufficient opportunities for people to live and work along a mass transit route and lessening their dependence on the automobile. This is the idea of a hybrid city, the hybrid between a dense, mass-transit-friendly city and the existing automobile-centric city. However, upon closer examination of these developments, these programs, rather than accommodating difference (of people, of lifestyles), only reinforce the insularity of socioeconomically homogenous enclaves of upper class privilege, branded with a tint of the "alternative" and "environmentally conscientiousness." For the Joint Development Plan to be credibly a diversification of the transit system, in terms of access to mobility and socio-economic diversity, these new developments ought to emphasize the class of people and neighborhoods that are currently underserved by the transportation system, suffering from the longest commute times even while they are closer to the city center.

A quick analysis of the completed JDP's since 1993 reveals that since 1993, six of the 11 projects are along the red line—by far the more expensive line cutting through the most least poor areas. To be fair, this line was so expensive because it is mostly underground, not reusing an existing rail line from the Union Pacific era. Out of the 1,674 new housing units created in the program, only 120 are "affordable

41 L.A. Metro, "Joint Development Program Brochure."

housing,” and that all in one development, instead of distributed among various other projects.⁴² These kinds of development projects show a clear spatial segregation of socioeconomic class differences. While there is another project under construction that will add 170 affordable apartments to the Red Line (at Westlake and MacArthur Park, which is a public park currently very well-used by the Latino population), this kind of disparity between the number of high-end/luxury condominiums versus affordable apartment complexes, and the lack of any sort of mixing of the two, reinforces the vision of Los Angeles as a socioeconomically segregated city.

42 L.A. Metro, “Joint Development Completed Projects,” available at http://www.metro.net/projects_studies/joint_development/images/JDP_completed_projects.pdf (Accessed 30 Nov 2011).

Conclusion

In this way, the segregation and silo-ization of Los Angeles is not only a result of immigrant groups creating ethnic enclaves as support systems for the migration process, necessary for social adaptation and survival. Nor is it the result of the self-interested decision-making of home owners. Instead, entire systems of regional techno-politics of infrastructure and governance perpetuate and reinforce the spatial segregation of access.

The mass transit system is huge, but invisible to most Angelenos, and serving a small and specific cross section of the population. If one imagines a future for the region of Los Angeles in which current conditions are intensified and amplified, the region must adapt accommodate for diversity of lifestyles and habits. In this scenario, the transit system emerges as the key player in the future of the region, with the power to either grant or deny access to the region, an essentially socio-political agenda whose tool is management of speed and space.

As argued earlier, the “right to the city” in Los Angeles is not so much the occupation of the city’s “center,” but the right to mobility. Los Angeles has many centers of both employment and recreation. In Los Angeles, what constitutes a practiced ownership of the city is not the occupation of the center, but to mobility across its vast terrain. It is the right to move about to access one’s home, job, recreational routines—all the various combinations that make up the patterns of life in a city.

Undoubtedly, architecture and urban planning are **disciplinary technologies** in the Foucauldian sense, in that they attempt to pattern space so that “**docile and useful bodies are created by and deployed with it.**”⁴³ However, the Los Angeles transportation system is also a terrain of conflict, as “docile bodies” reject the discipline imposed on them, with insurgent groups contesting the manner and form of its deployment. L.A. geographer Edward Soja contends that “the spatiality of human life must be interpreted and understood as fundamentally, from the start, a complex social product, a collectively created and purposeful configuration and socialization of space that defines our contextual habitat, the human and humanized geography in which we all live out our lives.”⁴⁴ As groups such as the Bus Riders Union grasp and take on this complex social product as not only a reality but a right, the system will be shaped to reflect the struggles of these groups. This socio-spatial dialectic, “with social processes shaping spatiality at the same time spatiality shap[ing] social processes,”⁴⁵ is central to any critique of regional and urban planning by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority, both its back and forth. The Plan by L.A. Metro reveals an ongoing struggle to code an equitable social relationship in the region, through the lens of infrastructure and access.

43 Rosalyn Deutsche, “Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City,” in *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 78, emphasis mine.

44 Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 17-18.

45 Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 18.

Urban Design Intervention

Intent of Thesis

If one accepts the idea that planners and architects participate in what Foucault calls governmentality, as agents of the control of bodies in space as a method of policing the population, then the opposite can also be assumed: architecture and planning can also be used to serve inclusiveness, openness, and dialogue, critical in today's increasingly heterogeneous and large cities. In Los Angeles, increasing the conditions of physical coexistence and sharing of facilities would already be an improvement over existing conditions. Rising gas prices and punitive congestion pricing will make the public transportation system more and more attractive to a larger and more diverse cross-section of the region's population. Thus, one can imagine a not-too-distant future when the urban spaces of the transportation system will become a significant part of everyday life in Los Angeles, for a large amount and broader cross-section of the population. It is thus poised to be a true common ground and a daily ritual of urban life that is socio-economically and culturally universal.

The intent of this thesis is to assume the above position, and to offer Los Angeles a strategy for carving out these new, more democratic, more urban spaces, out of its transportational infrastructure. Transportation is key because, as a system, it already navigates the vast and dispersed territory, and because it is already a system that mediates between the public and the private realms. The goal for this thesis is to insert material and spatial conditions for urban ethos and citizenship practice in this setting, conditions as earlier defined in Chapter 2. Through urban-scale interventions in the public realm, I hope to increase spaces of exposure, display, negotiation of othernesses, and public discourse. Starting from simple exposure and physical coexistence, like the sharing of services and facilities, the experience of inhabitants of Los Angeles can move from its current socio-economic and cultural insulation, toward increased awareness, opportunities for self-exhibition and self-expression in relation to others, and eventually toward real dialogue and celebration among different identities.

The full definition of this new inclusive and robust urban citizenship is not yet clear. However, there are some obvious ways in which spatial organization and design that currently perpetrate existing social inequalities can be ameliorated. Rather than designing the future of the transportation system along the lines of how the region has previously developed, i.e. based on exclusionary identity politics and reinforcing homogeneity of population and architectural form, there is a chance to imagine the transportation system offering a new kind of city, inserted into the existing network. In today's global city, especially in Los Angeles, what cannot be controlled are the propagation of new and hybrid identities, an increase in the variety of othernesses, shifts in the definition and practice of urban citizenship, and an overall increase in population. What we might aspire to direct, as designers and planners, is the provision of spaces and conditions that foster and acclimate the population toward the goal of a successful multicultural city.

Proposal

The region's transportation system is my site. As elaborated in Chapter 3, the conceptual premise for this decision is the idea that the region's transportation system is itself a technique of governmentality, a terrain of contestation playing a key role in allowing or denying mobility in the region, or the Lefebvrian idea of the "right to the city" in Los Angeles. It is a system that currently serves a somewhat small and certainly specific portion of the population: only 10% of the population uses mass transit, most of whom are disproportionately poor and immigrant. However, it must and will grow to be more democratically used in the region. But as it stands today, it is a system that reinforces the socio-economic divisions and insulation between groups that characterize Los Angeles, controlling the access of the working poor population to the nexuses of power and privilege. It is a system that inconveniences its users with long and indirect routes, uncertain commute times, offering little comforts and amenities.

This thesis is not concerned with proposing technical improvements on the transportation system. Rather, it is concerned with the nature of the occupation of public spaces in and around the system, and how they can be reoriented toward the goals of connectivity, education, and the cultivation of a public ethos. The public square, or agora in the classical sense, is not tenable in Los Angeles. Instead, I am accepting the dispersed nature of Los Angeles, and propose a series of **micro-publics**, or miniaturized public spaces, to be spread out all over the city. The mass transit system is the starting point. These new micro-publics, if they are to be social spaces that contribute to the life of the city, must be connected to everyday use and habits. They must be more than simply accessible in the most general sense of the term. Programming becomes key in making these spaces function as public squares, in the best urbanistic sense of the term. These spaces are conceived of as ambiguous spaces in the public realm, where programs are diversified and hybridized toward a more complex, more urbanistic ideal for Los Angeles. These are spaces where ambiguity is amplified and blurring between boundaries (social/ethnic/cultural/land-use) embraced. These new spaces, or expanded seams in the existing public utility, seek to create a public realm that fosters an 'urban' occupation of space, i.e. more sharing of public amenities, more exposure to different groups, more understanding of the particular in relation to the universal, in the life of Angelenos. While utilitarian efficacy of the system is important and addressed in this thesis, the larger ambition is to use this public infrastructure as a structure to support the systematic insertion of many micro-public spaces into the region. In this sense, I am appropriating the transportation system itself as the site—while it currently perpetuates social divisions and access to mobility negatively in the region, it has the potential to effect a qualitative spatial and social change throughout the Los Angeles region.

The re-imagining of the system is especially critical today, as acknowledged in the many reports and plans various levels of government agencies have issued. The conviction that the region must seriously re-examine its transportation infrastructure is clearly articulated in the Long Range Transportation Plan of 2009 issued by L.A. Metro, the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan issued by Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and in the fact of the passing of ballot Measure R in 2008, a half-cent sales tax for L.A. County for transportation infrastructural improvements. All agree: the region will continue to grow, and therefore must diversify mobility options in order to accommodate the increasing population and meet desired levels of "livability." Debates over bus versus rail aside, mass transit, in whatever combination of modalities, will thus become a more significant public utility to the region in

the decades to come. This is an opportune moment to imagine how this system itself can be reconfigured to provide new public spaces and a mode of occupying them in Los Angeles, as an essentially urbanizing force in the region.

Thus, the central idea of the design proposal is to introduce new public spaces to the transportation system, and to equip them with a range of programmatic and formal interventions that interject a different urban ethos of occupation of the public space, and the interaction between the public and the private realm, than currently existing. In examining the existing system, I have created a catalogue of spatial occupation typologies found in the transportation system, as well as various peripheral activities they currently and potentially can support. This catalogue, or programmatic matrix of possibilities, suggests a diversification and enrichment of the use and formal typologies of the transportation system, through hybridization. The transportation system itself already functions pragmatically and conceptually as a “seam” between the public and the private realm in Los Angeles, a city in which that boundary is hard-lined and clear. The design intent is to blur that clarity, and to provide alternate and novel methods of inhabiting that boundary.

Role of Institutions

At this point, it is important to point out that, just as advocacy groups like the Bus Riders Union and KIWA are actively doing important work to promote the rights of various groups, there are other non-profit organizations that attempt to challenge and redefine the notion of identity and citizenship in a multicultural society through things like arts programming. For example, in her book, *Sound, Space, and the City*, Marina Peterson writes about the free outdoor public concert series organized by the non-profit, Grand Performances. Taking place in California Plaza, a five-block area that is a pseudo-public space within the corporate fortress of the Bunker Hill, Grand Performances is a project of “city-and civic subject-making”¹ that occurs through this institution and the arts programming it provides. Peterson explores the “meaning and making of the civic through its conditions of possibility, institutional structures, and content, as well as potentialities for membership and exclusion.”² She writes, “In Los Angeles, trends of privatization, downtown revitalization, immigration, and an emphasis on arts and culture that are defining features of neoliberal globalization provide a context in which international arts programming and the figuring of a local multiculturalism as international help shape Los Angeles as a global city in emergent ways.”³

For Peterson, this is a real example of civic identity-making through participation, importantly in an urban context: “As participants in civic events, public concert audience members are civic subjects. The term ‘civic subject’ marks a critical terrain of subject formation related to citizenship that is also fundamentally of the city... The city has taken on a privileged role as a site for the production and negotiation of the terms of national citizenship.”⁴ Taking a carefully measured position to the “constructed neutrality”⁵ of downtown, Peterson describes the role of this particular institution in relation to the center-making project of Grand Performances, in geographic, social, and conceptual terms, and its relationship to the history and context of Bunker Hill.⁶ She argues that by first, attracting various groups out of their various enclaves to the center, then by allowing them to occupy that space and to share a common experience, this program helps to form a common identity for these participants, to give them a sense of ownership of the city, and to reinforce the city’s center as the conceptual common gathering ground of Los Angeles. Precisely the act of participation in these public events “creates new kinds of urban subjects who, as members of a moral community that fosters tolerance over intolerance, consensus over dissent, and togetherness over fragmentation, enact and embody the comportment and disposition that facilitates urban civilities along those lines.”⁷

To be sure, the context of Bunker Hill complicates this project of civic identity-making. For Peterson, the emphasis on multicultural programming by this organization becomes one of the many active ways in which a “public” is defined. Again, harking back to Foucault’s definition of governmentality, Peterson’s

1 Marina Peterson, *Sound, Space, and the City: Civic Performance in Downtown Los Angeles*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 24.

2 Peterson, *Sound*, 3.

3 Peterson, *Sound*, 3.

4 Peterson, *Sound*, 9.

5 Peterson, *Sound*, 20.

6 Peterson, *Sound*, 12.

7 Peterson, *Sound*, 151.



Figure 26: Urban planning exhibit in a community gallery, Long Beach, CA. The pieces are found objects and toys, to be manipulated by the exhibit-goer.

dissection of the competition and planning briefs of the redevelopment of this area in the 1980s reveals the differences of desired publics among those designers and planners: how to deal with the “residents” (read homeless) versus how to attract the “right people,” i.e. the educated class with disposable incomes and an interest in culture. The plans initially called for the institutional presence of a dance company, a museum, and a public forum, but only the Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by Arata Isozaki, was built. Thus, the arts as a genre themselves are complicit to some degree in excluding portions of the population.

However, within this project of defining a public, the multicultural dimension to the program reveals a dual agenda: the perpetration of the commodification of ethnic identity on one hand, and the possibility of politicized resistance on the other.⁸ Identity, thus, can function as both “consumer product” and as a tool for asserting “rights, access, and belonging”⁹ in the city. Again, in this example the manner of occupying a “public” space engenders a conceptual space of contestation. This, for Peterson, is held in tension by legal status of the organization as a nonprofit. She writes, “Nonprofits exemplify the privatization of public services in the United States, as reflected in their growing numbers and increasing role in administering social welfare. Yet nonprofits stand between public and private, existing as both at once, mediating and blurring the line between “public” and “private” rather than simply reflecting the privatization of the public.”¹⁰ Thus, the socio-psychological process of validation of identity and membership of the particular within a whole is a real agenda for this organization. Peterson concludes, “Membership in the urban public is made through access to, ownership of, and presence in the center...Organized around diversity, togetherness, and consensus, downtown civic performance enables a multicultural public to emerge as a normative urban public, supporting sense of belonging and recognition of a diverse city.”¹¹

This kind of participatory citizenship is also attempted in the gallery setting. At a new residential development in Downtown Long Beach, which pitched itself as a community based on the “urban” lifestyle, a public gallery was included as a part of the developer’s giveback to the city. The exhibit on display in Winter 2011-2012 was by urban planner James Rojas, who had created an abstract scale model

8 Peterson, *Sound*, 32.

9 Peterson, *Sound*, 32.

10 Peterson, *Sound*, 32-33.

11 Peterson, *Sound*, 45.



Figure 27: Farmer's market. Image by Image by Martin Schall, reproduced with permission of author.



Figure 28: A farmer's market held in a parking lot, Long Beach.

of the city of Long Beach, represented in three section: the Hill (Signal Hill) the City (Long Beach) and the beach. He populated it with toys and found objects, like “items such as hair rollers, Chinese checkers pieces and glued-together blocks of wood,”¹² to be moved around the site by members of the community, as a tool to stimulate interest in the public and to generate creative feedback from local citizens, and thus begin a dialogue with stakeholders in the community. The exhibit, funded by the Museum of Latin American Art and the Arts Council of Long Beach, had an appealingly toy-like, whimsical quality to it—there were built-in chaise longue in the display base from which to gaze up the Plexiglas ground, and the Signal Hill was represented as an elevated mound of AstroTurf. There are real limits to judging how effectively the exhibit met its purported agenda. Nonetheless, this does offer another concrete example of how designers and planners are attempting to raise the stakes in participatory citizenship in Los Angeles.

With these projects in mind, I propose these various programmatic inserts to be overseen by a new management arm of Los Angeles Metro. Tentatively called the Metro Urbanization Partnership (MUP), it will be a division within the L.A. Metro that oversees community relations and programming. The L.A. Metro, as an institution, is already a megalith, with a substantial department that oversees relations with vendors and small business owners interested in doing business with Metro. Currently they hold monthly Transportation Business Advisory Council (TBAC) meetings, “a forum to discuss topics and issues impacting business owners throughout the contracting community.”¹³ The MUP’s mission would be to offer programs in partnership with local communities, and to showcase specific neighborhoods of Los Angeles to other parts. It will partner with existing arts, ethnicity-based, or interest-based non-profit organizations in the region, such as the earlier-mentioned Grand Performances, as well as growing urban phenomena such as food trucks and farmers markets. As an agency, the MUP would have the advantage of reaching out to existing neighborhoods, giving them a chance to contribute to the overall cultural geography of the region through the Metro system. The number of farmers markets in the Los Angeles, for example, is dramatically on the rise, “with 124 Certified Farmers’ Markets in Los Angeles

12 Bob Pool, “In Long Beach exhibit, urban planning is art and play,” *Los Angeles Times Online*, January 10, 2012, available at: <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jan/10/local/la-me-model-city-20120110> . (Accessed 21 Feb 2012).

13 L.A. Metro, “Overview.” Available at <http://www.metro.net/about/agency/mission/> (Accessed May 2012).

County alone.”¹⁴ These markets not only provide alternative source of food shopping for smaller vendors, they are also a key public forum for the spread of political and environmentalist causes. Also, food trucks in Los Angeles have long been a creative vehicle, literally and figuratively speaking, for hybrid culinary expressions and entrepreneurship. It is one of the most successful venue by which creative ways of mixing cultures and innovations in food are happening today in Los Angeles. The diversity and number of grassroots and advocacy groups are impressive and thriving in Los Angeles, so the MUP’s main goal is to act as a liaison between the spaces and opportunities inherent in the public transportation system and these groups.

14 Claudia Parasciv, *From Anonymity to Public Space: Exploring the Role of Farmers Markets in Los Angeles’ Public Realm* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Master of Science in Architecture Studies Thesis, 2010), 11.

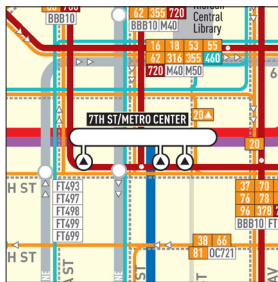
Sites

In order to test out these expanded seams of hybrid programs, I explore in more detail the implementation of the matrix on four different conditions found in the system: the nexus, the crossing, the node, and the terminus. Each has a local condition, and each also has a relationship to the system as a whole. These conditions as sites provide four different scales at which to propose micro-publics, while retaining a systematic approach. With this matrix implemented on each of these conditions, I explore how these new blurring agents, in response to each specific context, could infect the system.

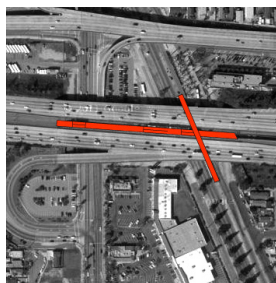
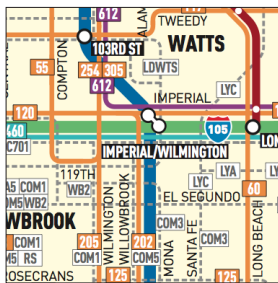
Four Typological Conditions for Intervention



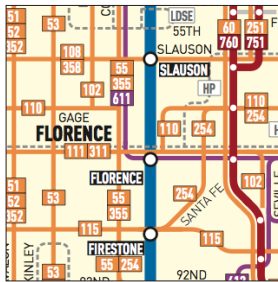
Nexus



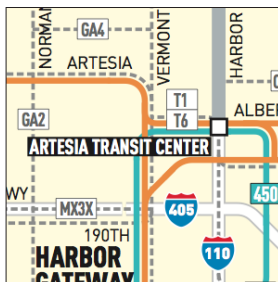
Crossing



Node



Terminus



Conditions

Where many and multiple modes of transport come together

Occupies physical and conceptual center of city

Final destination for many rides, for wide cross-section of population

Seam for all groups

Where two different modes of transport intersect

A major transfer point, but away from center

Important for the dispersed quality of region-- one center, many crossings

Seam for those with cars vs. those using mass transit

A stop, or a point, along the line

A minor transfer point

Connection to local neighborhood/ community

Seam for neighborhoods/enclaves and temporalities

End of the line

Switch to automobile (Park & Ride stations)

Switch to the less-urban periphery

Seam for land use

Figure 29: Chart of site conditions. Transport maps from L.A. Metro (Accessed 3 Feb 2012). Aerial backgrounds from Google Maps (Accessed 22 Feb 2012).

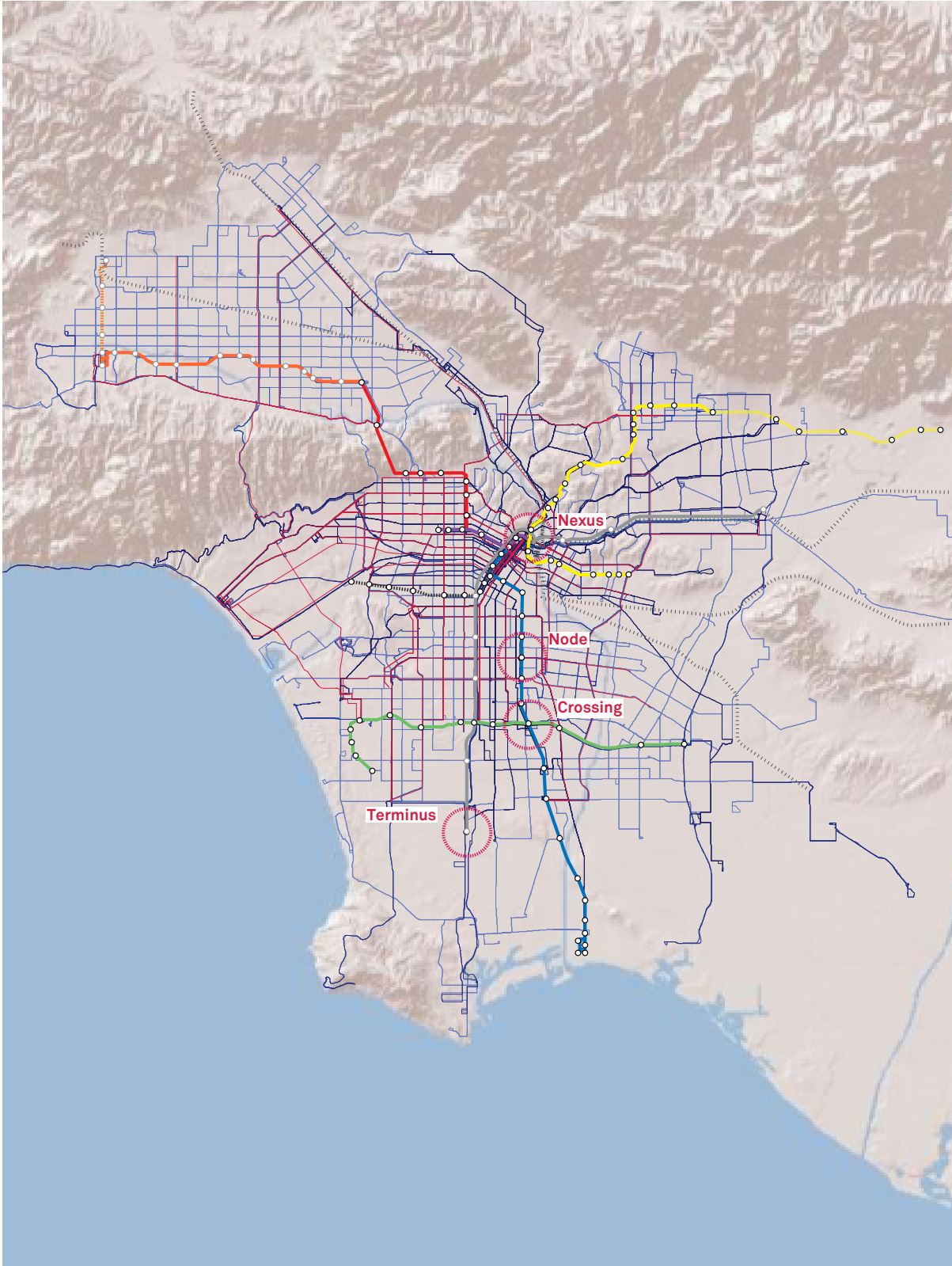


Figure 30: Four typological conditions of the transportation system, as four sites.



Figure 31: Panoramic view of existing site, from Flower St. looking west. Image compiled from Google Streetview, Apr 2012.

Condition 1: The Nexus

Downtown 7th Street Metro Center

This site is the most symbolically loaded of the four conditions. Occupying the heart of Los Angeles' Central Business District (CBD), this site necessarily confronts the question of the symbolic and practical relationships to other institutions that occupy the center. The presence of these other institutions is what emphasizes the notion of the global city at this particular site so strongly, where all of the players that constitute Los Angeles as a global city—civic, financial commercial, informational, cultural—are concentrated spatially within a distinct and walkable downtown area. This is the physical locus where many overlapping systems of information and influence converge. Within the site's quarter-mile (or 5-minute) walking radius, one finds the major financial and corporate consulting institutions (777 Tower, Ernst & Young), commercial centers (Macy's), infrastructural gateways (One Wilshire Blvd, the "prime communications hub between Asia and the Western world"¹⁵ and also the "most expensive real estate in the country,"¹⁶ the MCI Center), an important civic institution, the Riordan Central Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library, the exclusive California Club, and the postmodern icon, Bonaventure Hotel. Within 10 minutes from this site one can reach the historically significant Pershing Square Park (once known as the Central Park of Los Angeles) and the Civic Center complex, featuring not only the mall of governmental agencies (Los Angeles City Hall, Caltrans headquarters, municipal courthouse and jail) but also the cultural institutions of Los Angeles (the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Museum of Contemporary Art, by Isozaki). California Plaza is nearby, where free outdoor concerts are held regularly to feature the region's multiculturalism by Grand Performances. This is a site that has the potential to provide a ceremonial and conceptual gravitas to a transportation center, where the provision of an open public space in a physical and conceptual center of the city has meaning.

Transportationally, it can be argued that the Union Station is the major transportation center of Los Angeles. Union Station is currently undergoing a master planning competition, in which six prominent design firms participated and which is exhibited at the station. They are "vision boards" for 2050, in preparation for the California High-Speed Rail System. The original structure is a Spanish Colonial Revival style structure, and it is the end of the Metro Rail Red Line and Purple Line, the Metro Bus Silver Line, and connects to the Amtrak and regional Metroliner train lines, long distance bus coach

15 Kazys Varnelis, "Invisible City: Telecommunication," in *The Infrastructural City: Networked Ecologies in Los Angeles*. Kazys Varnelis, ed. New York: Actar, 2009," 122.

16 Varnelis, "Invisible City: Telecommunication," 126.



Figure 32: The two transportation centers of L.A. : 7th St. Metro Center versus Union Station. 7th Street Metro Center is more centrally located with regard to commercial and financial districts in Downtown L.A.



Figure 35: Entrance to subway at Hope and 7th St.



Figure 34: Entrance to Metro Center at Flower and 7th St.



Figure 36: Bus stop at 7th and Figueroa. Minimal shelter and signage. Image from Google Streetview, May 2012.



Figure 33: Connection to buses across 7th St.

services. It is also nestled between the historic El Pueblo de Los Angeles, where the original mission of Los Angeles was founded, the historic Chinatown to the northwest, Little Tokyo to the south, and the Mexican enclave Boyle Heights to the east.

However, I would argue for a second transportation center that is more central to the downtown. Union Station is located north of the center, across the 101 Hollywood Freeway. It is within walking distance to some parts of the Civic Center, but not much else. The current end of the Blue Line is better situated to be articulated as an architectural and urbanistic center, taking a place with the other institutional headquarters of the city. Los Angeles, as a global city, can certainly accommodate more than one “center” in its urban area; New York has Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal, and Chicago has Union Station and the Ogilvie Transportation Center. In a sense, Union Station connects the city to the rest of the country, while the 7th Street Metro Center connects the city to the rest of the city.

As it stands today, the site 7th Street Metro Center is not really a place, even though it is the end of the Blue Line, and a major connection point for buses and the Silver Line. It is simply a subway stop that emerges out of two block corners of the Roosevelt Building and the building 655 Hope, with connections to dozens of bus lines within a block radius, accessible across the street in non-protected, barely articulated bus stops. Some bus stops do not even feature benches. There is a lack of signage and information, with no sense of unity of place, or any sense of ceremony in having entered the center of the city.

My proposed design of this station is that of a new transit center in the downtown district, as a festival ground for Downtown L.A. An expanded underground space connects the station to nearby buildings, and the new ground is bracketed by a new institutional building to the south of the site. The project occupies most of the block bounded by 7th Street to the north, 8th Street to the south, Flower Street to the east, and Figueroa Street to the west. The existing Italianate office building on the north of the site is kept, but the existing parking lots and structures are demolished.

The programming of the new surface is that of the urban festival, for both quotidian and special events (cultural food festivals), and a new institution of immigration. This space can be programmed by existing nonprofit institutions in the city that promote multiculturalism, such as Grand Performances. But this festival ground is also meant to be used as a more quotidian urban stage, for farmers markets and meetings. It is part- transit center and part-plaza. This new blank and expanding ground is proposed as a formal opposite to and a confrontation with the corporate fortresses of Bunker Hill described by Mike Davis.

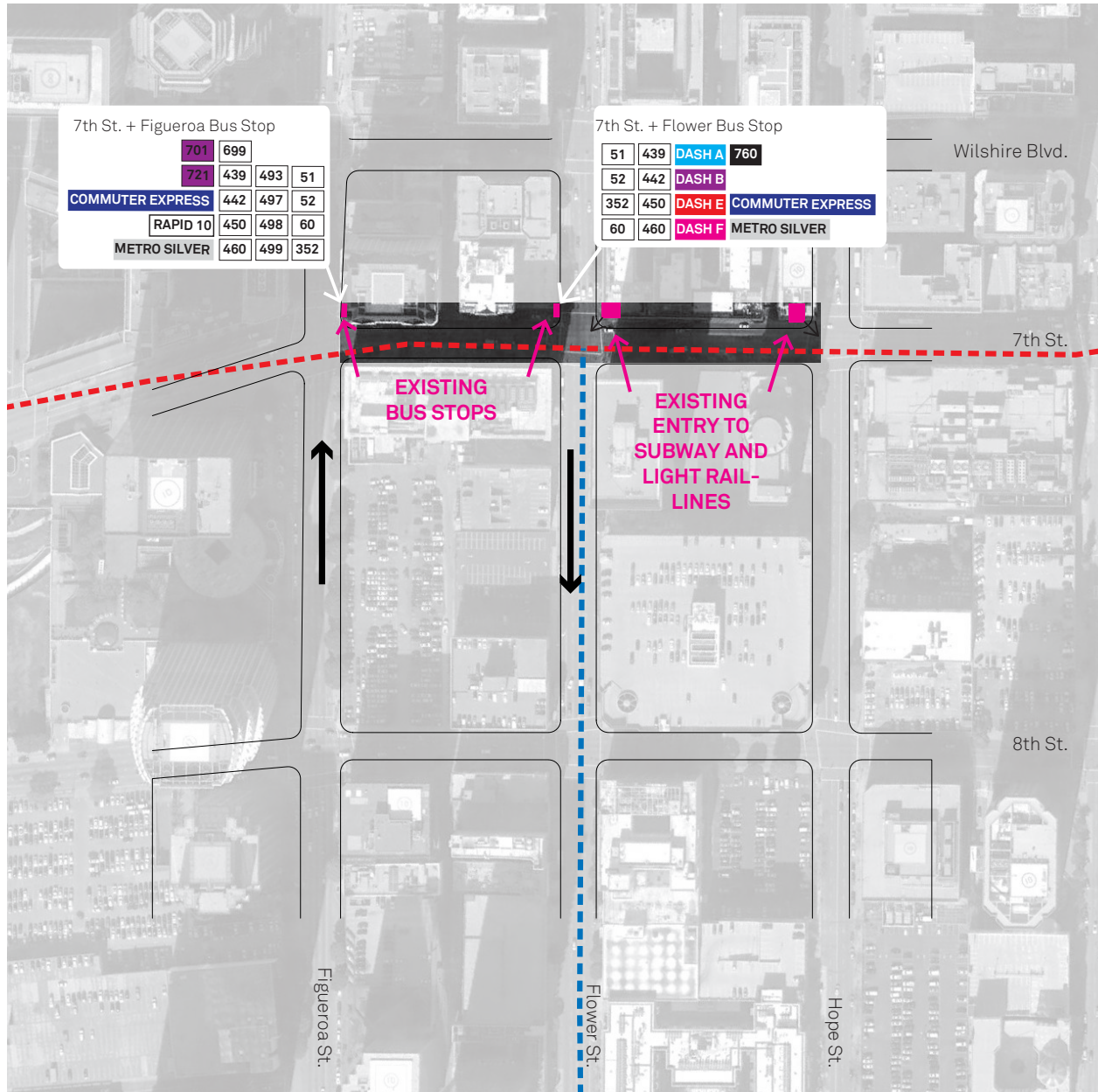


Figure 37: Nexus: Analysis of existing condition. The 7th Street Metro Center is actually two subway entries and bus connections across the street and down the block. There is no sense of place at the site. Background image from Google Earth (Accessed May 2012).

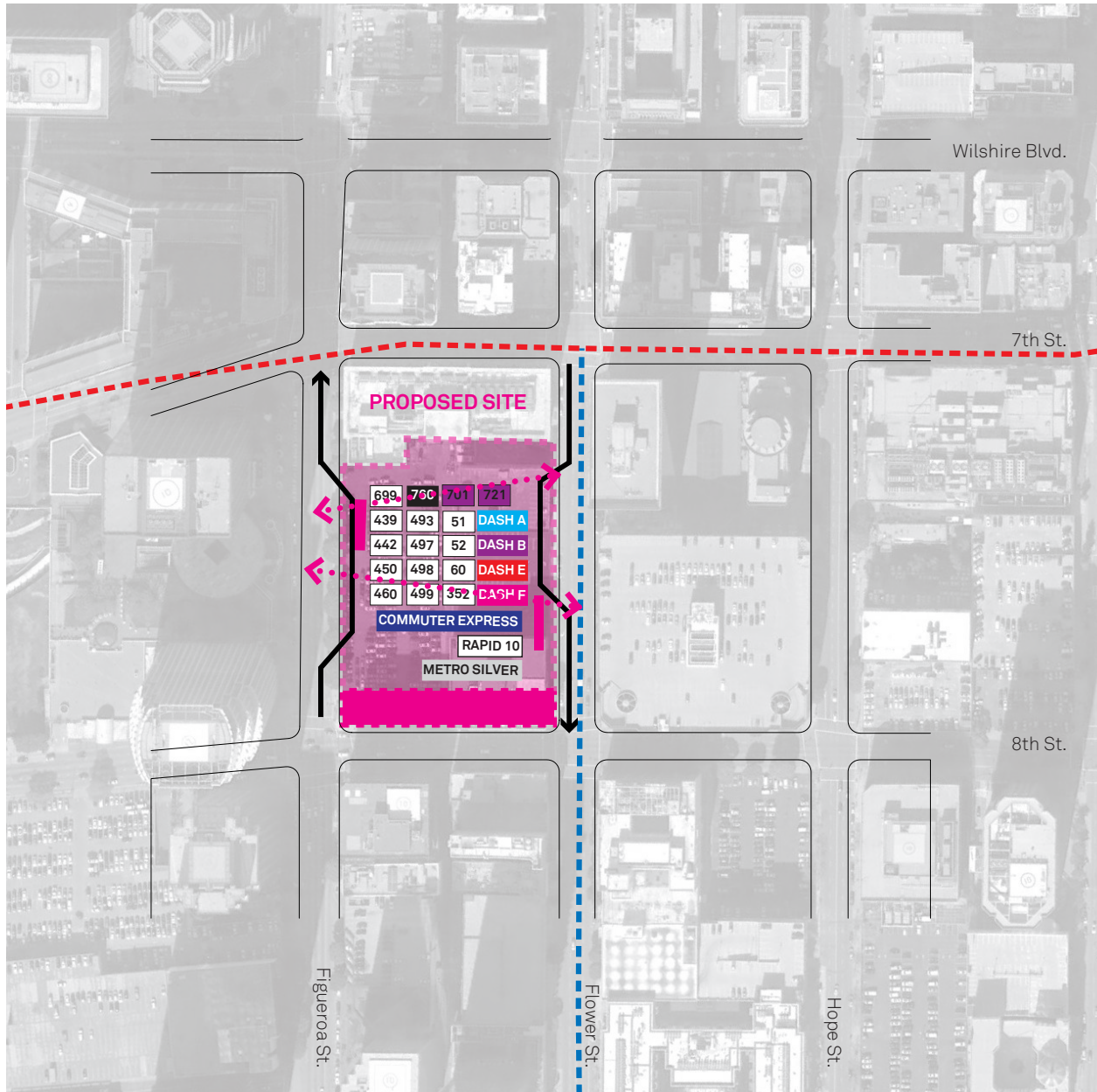


Figure 38: Nexus: Design Intent for site. By taking over the block across the street currently used primarily for parking, this site can host a real transportation center that connects the subway lines to the buses, and provide a new urban festival ground in the heart of Downtown L.A. Background image from Google Earth (Accessed May 2012).



Figure 39: Nexus: Site Plan

- 1 L.A. Central Library Central Branch
- 2 One Wilshire Blvd
- 3 Pershing Square Park
- 4 California Club
- 5 Macy's Plaza

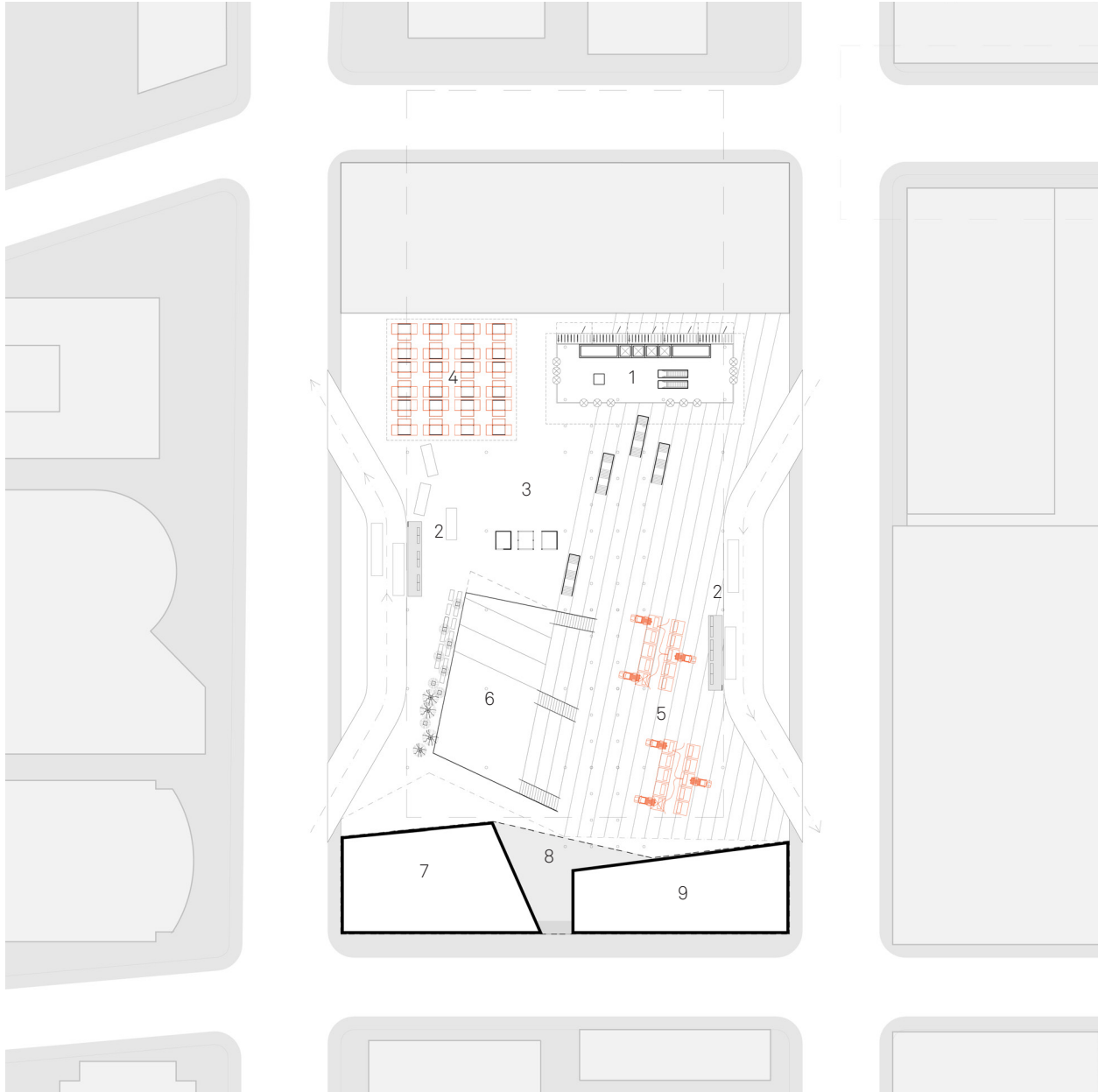


Figure 40: Nexus: Proposed Plan

- 1 entry to subway
- 2 bus connections
- 3 plaza
- 4 food stands
- 5 area for temporary uses
- 6 outdoor theater
- 7 ground floor public space
- 8 upper level viewing area
- 9 upper levels commercial space

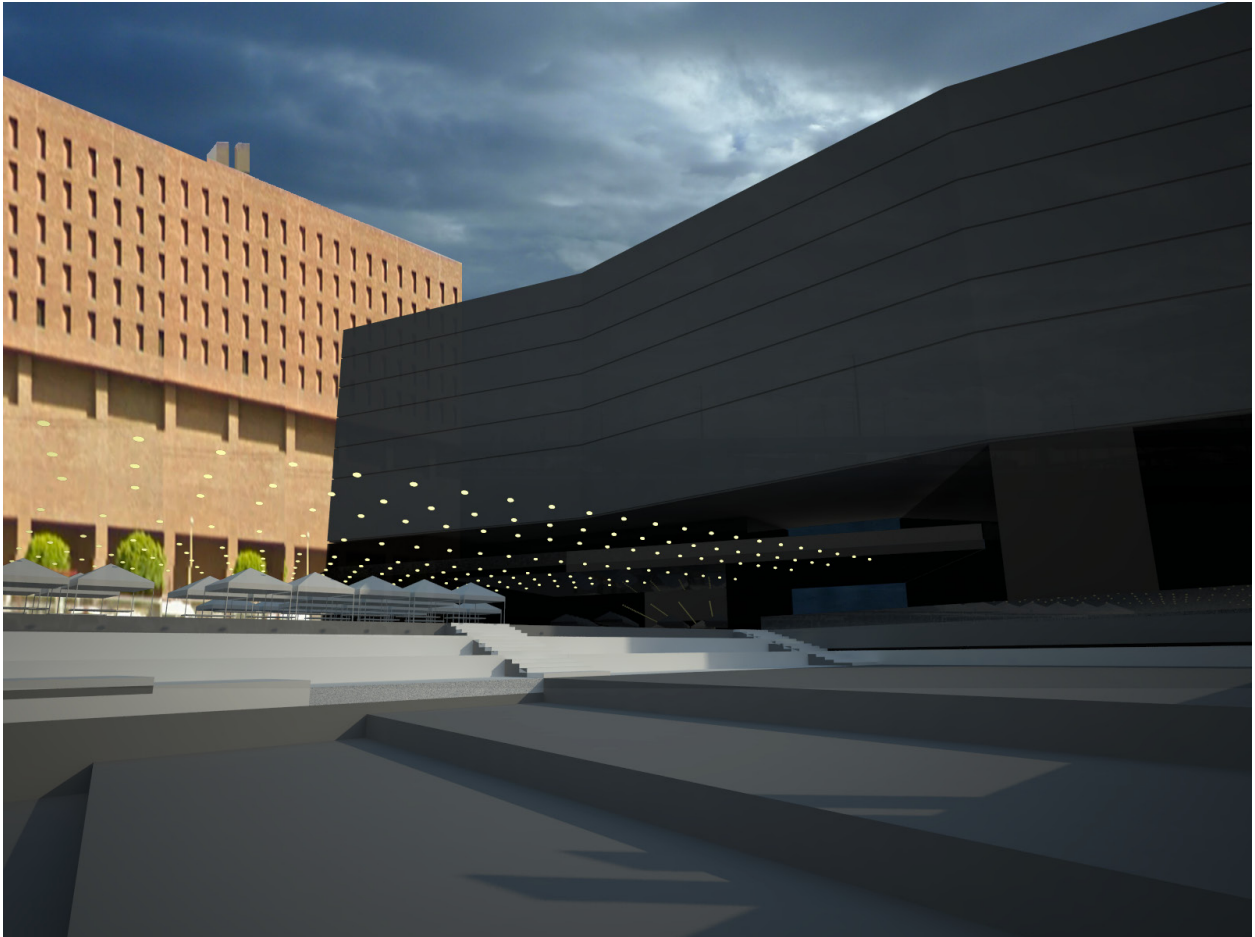


Figure 41: View from sunken performance space, looking south toward new building and Macy's Plaza beyond.

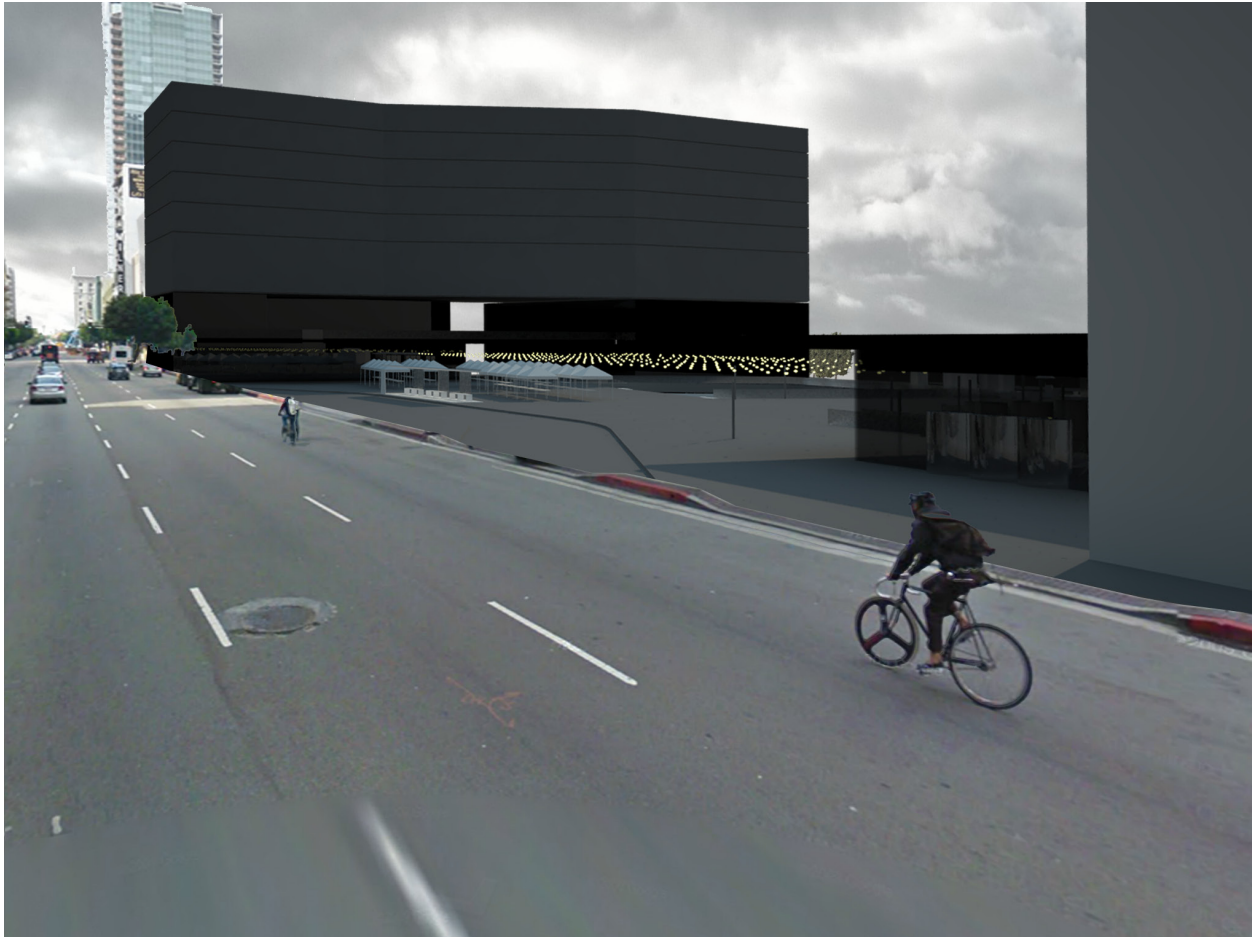


Figure 42: View from Flower St. looking south. The subway entrance is located closer to 7th St to the north.

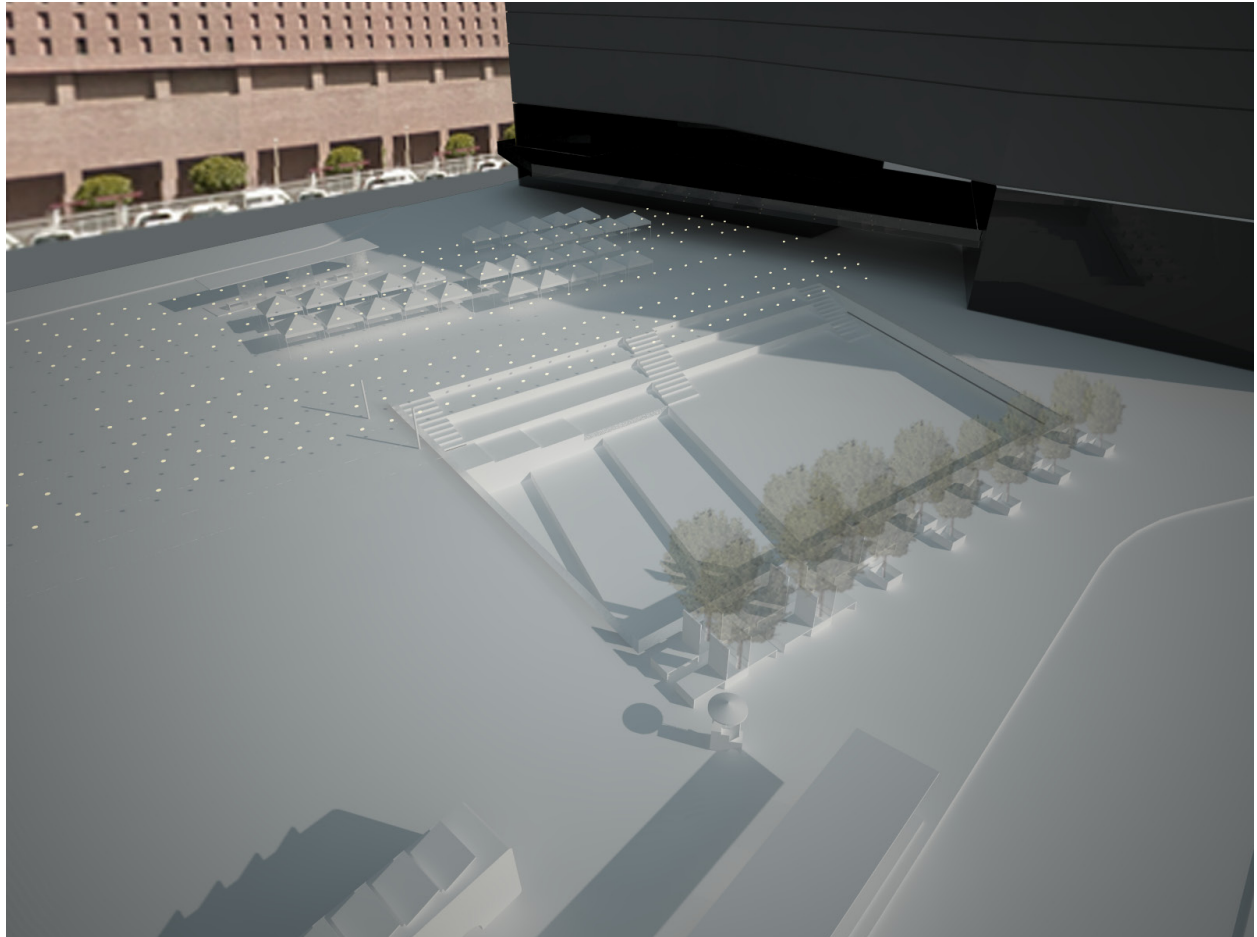


Figure 43: View of outdoor performance space, plantings, and plaza.

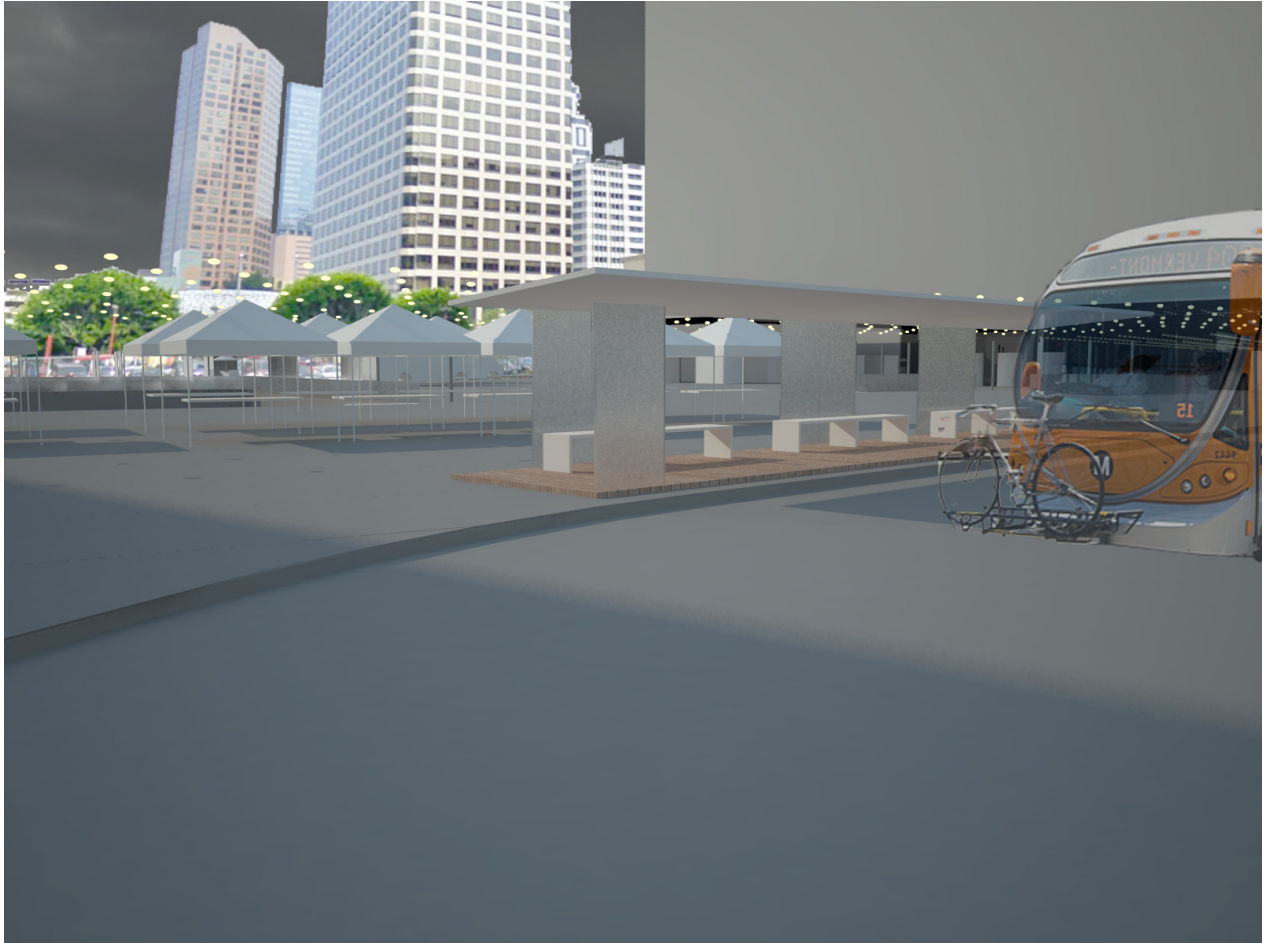


Figure 44: View of bus transfer station.



Figure 45: Panoramic view of existing site. Image compiled from Google Streetview (Accessed April 2012)

Condition 2: The Crossing

Wilmington-Imperial Stop on Blue and Green Lines

This site, in the Willowbrook-Watts neighborhood, is the seam between different modes of mobility, e.g. freeway and mass transit. It is also a seam in elevation: the station connects the Blue Line, which is a surface-street train traveling roughly north-south, and the Green Line, which is a train that shares the median of the 105 Freeway going east-west, at approximately 44 feet above ground, and various local buses at the Park & Ride site beneath.

This site presents a particularly hostile and isolated environment, but also a spatially novel condition. Traffic passing by at 75 mph creates a very loud environment on the Green Line boarding platform, which is also minimally protected from the elements, with just a roof covering portions of the platform. But this site also provides a novel occupation of spaces and structures normally totally inaccessible to the pedestrian. On the Green Line platform, one literally stands in the median of the freeway, separated from traffic by a mere 12 feet of train tracks and a chain link fence. In the ascent to this platform during a transfer from one of the buses or the Blue Line to the Green Line, one goes up through the vast underbelly of the concrete deck to emerge in the center of the freeway. This is an undeniably evocative concrete space, currently mostly used for Park-and-Ride parking and outdated public “art” adorning the capitals of raw concrete columns. This site and space provides a new way to occupy the emblem of Los Angeles, the ribbon of concrete freeway. I propose to open up this particular seam temporally and programmatically, by first linking this station (un-isolating it) to the nearby strip mall to the south, adding space for markets/swamp meets, and by adding a viewing platform suspended over the freeway.

At this site, the intervention has the opportunity to restore a quintessential Los Angeles character—the romance and the spectacle of the freeway, and of cars. The intervention presents a new platform, suspended over the icon of the freeway, for people to return to a picturesque framing of the truest L.A. landscape. This space can be used as a secondary waiting area, with transport information appropriately displayed and announced within the space to allow passengers to use that space to wait productively. The third is to connect the platforms with its urban context. The existing station is right next to a typical auto-oriented strip mall, but totally cut off from it with fences and orientation. By connecting directly to that site, the intervention appropriates a fundamentally auto-oriented urban typology, hybridizing it and granting access. This new structure can also be used itself for small- to medium-size retail, and for entertainment and education programs to be determined by the MUP.

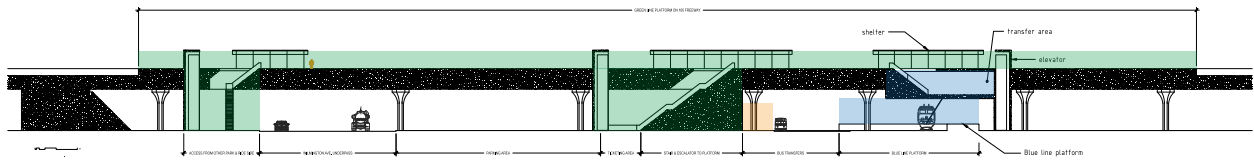


Figure 46: Section of existing condition, showing connections between the Blue Line, Green Line, and buses.



Figure 47: Stair up to Green line platform and concrete capitals adorned with “art”



Figure 48: Green line platform near loud passing cars

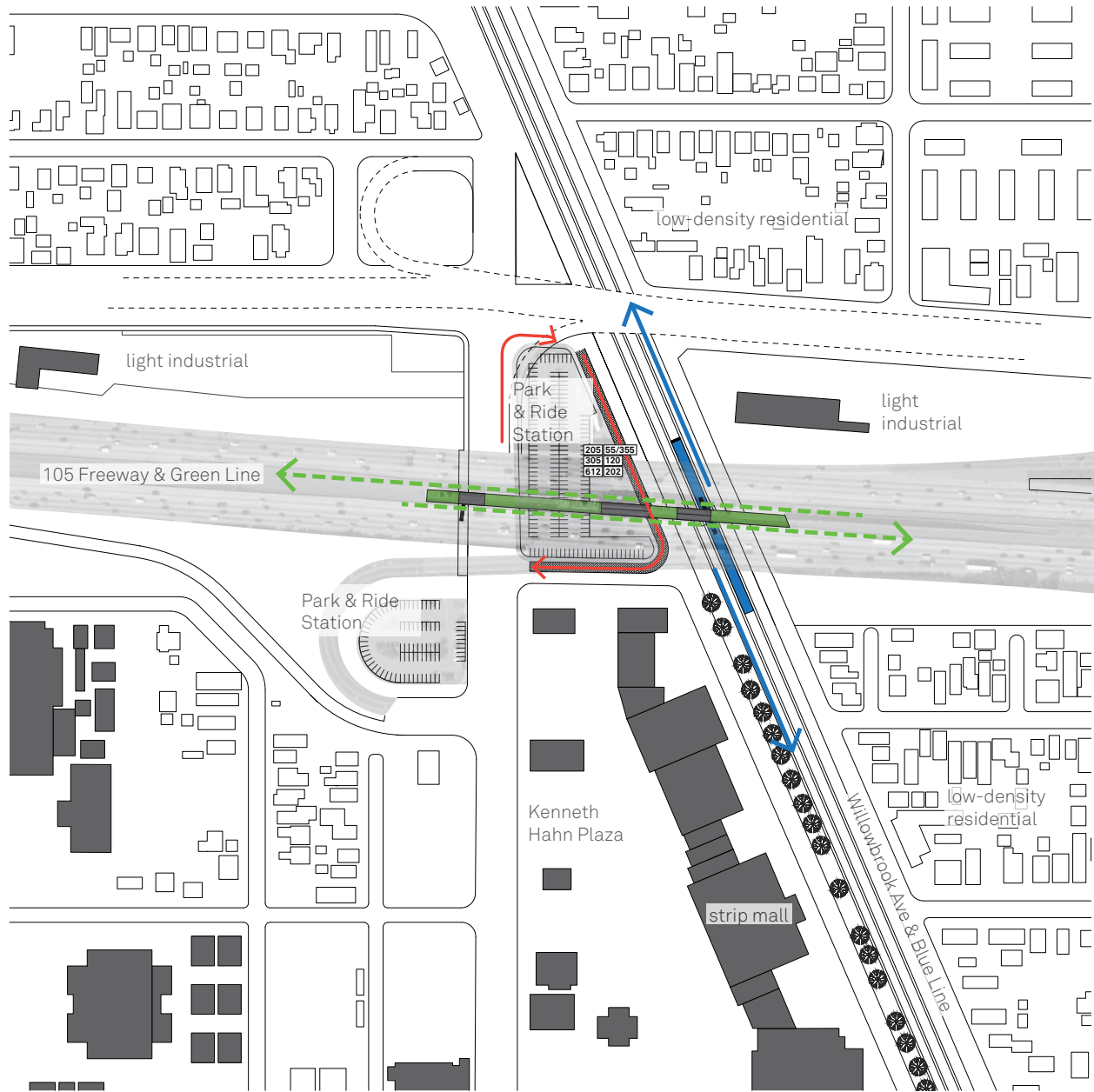


Figure 49: Crossing: Analysis of existing condition. The Green Line shares the median of the 105 Freeway, 40-some feet above street level. The Blue Line is at surface-level but it is cut off from nearby features of the site. Bus transfers and parking located beneath the deck of the freeway.

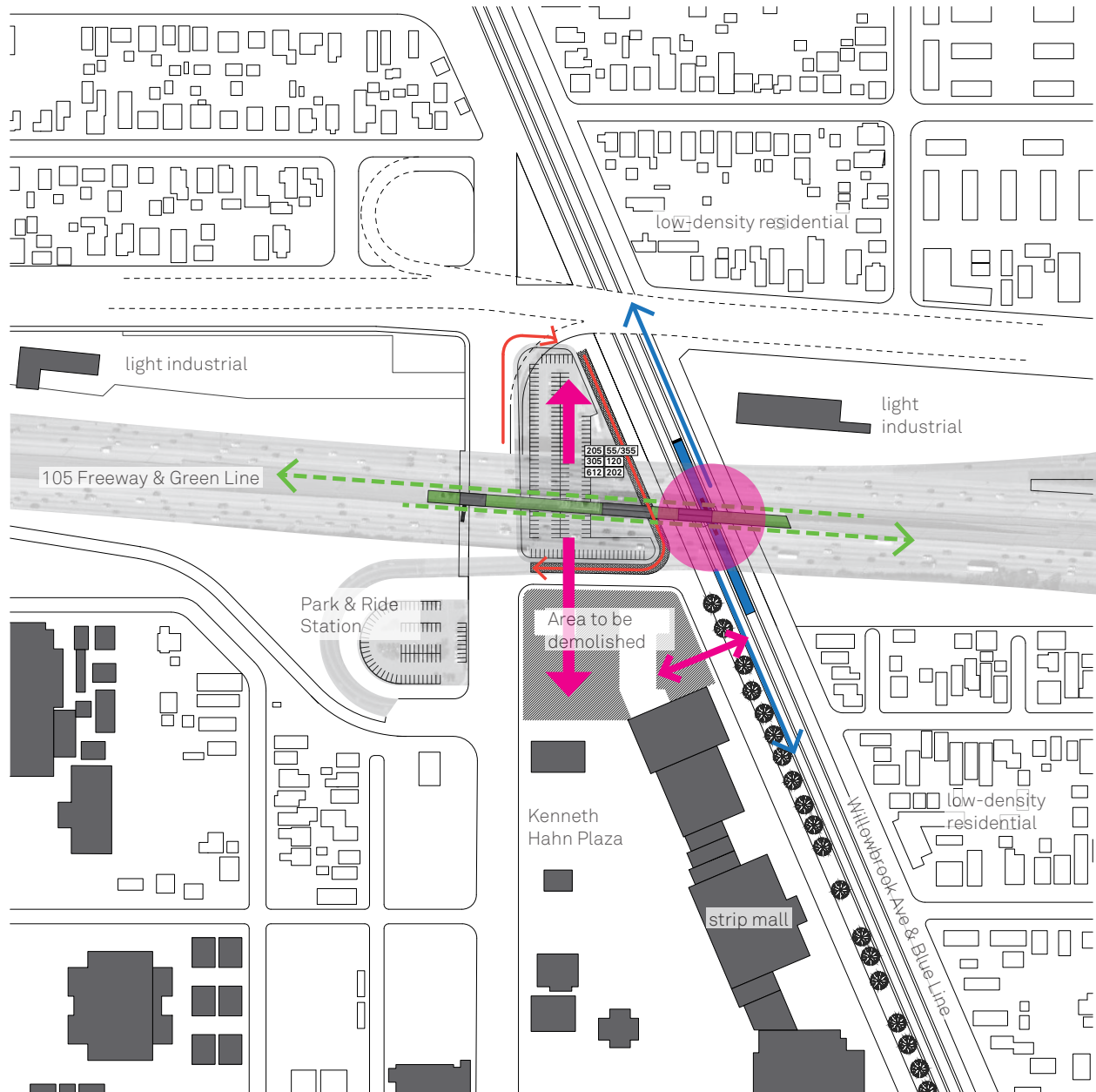


Figure 50: Crossing: Design Intent for Site: Connect the spaces of mass transit to nearby features, bridge across the freeway, and improve the transfer experience itself.

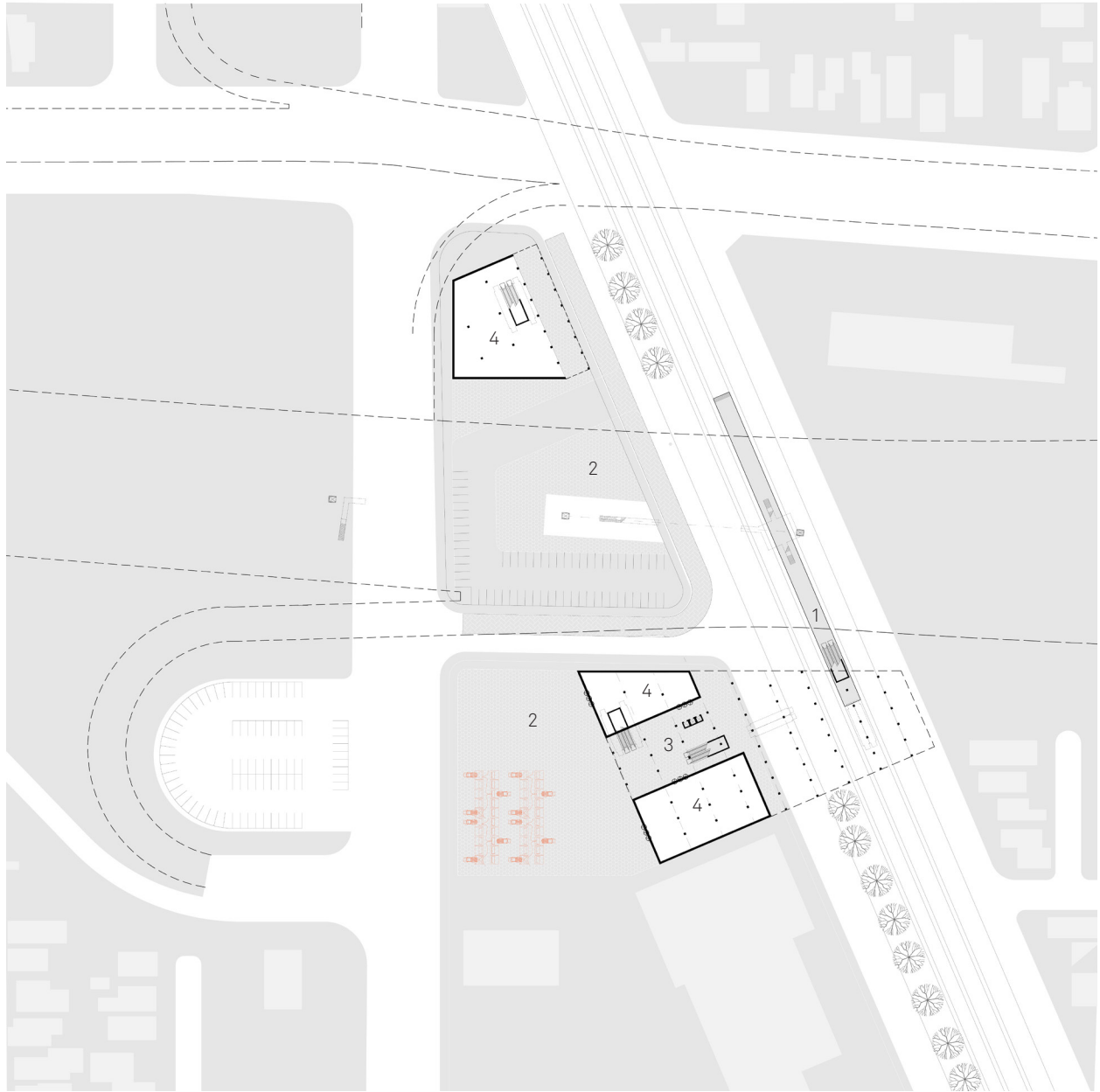


Figure 51: Grossing: Ground Level Plan

- 1 access from Blue Line
- 2 plaza
- 3 covered waiting area
- 4 commerce

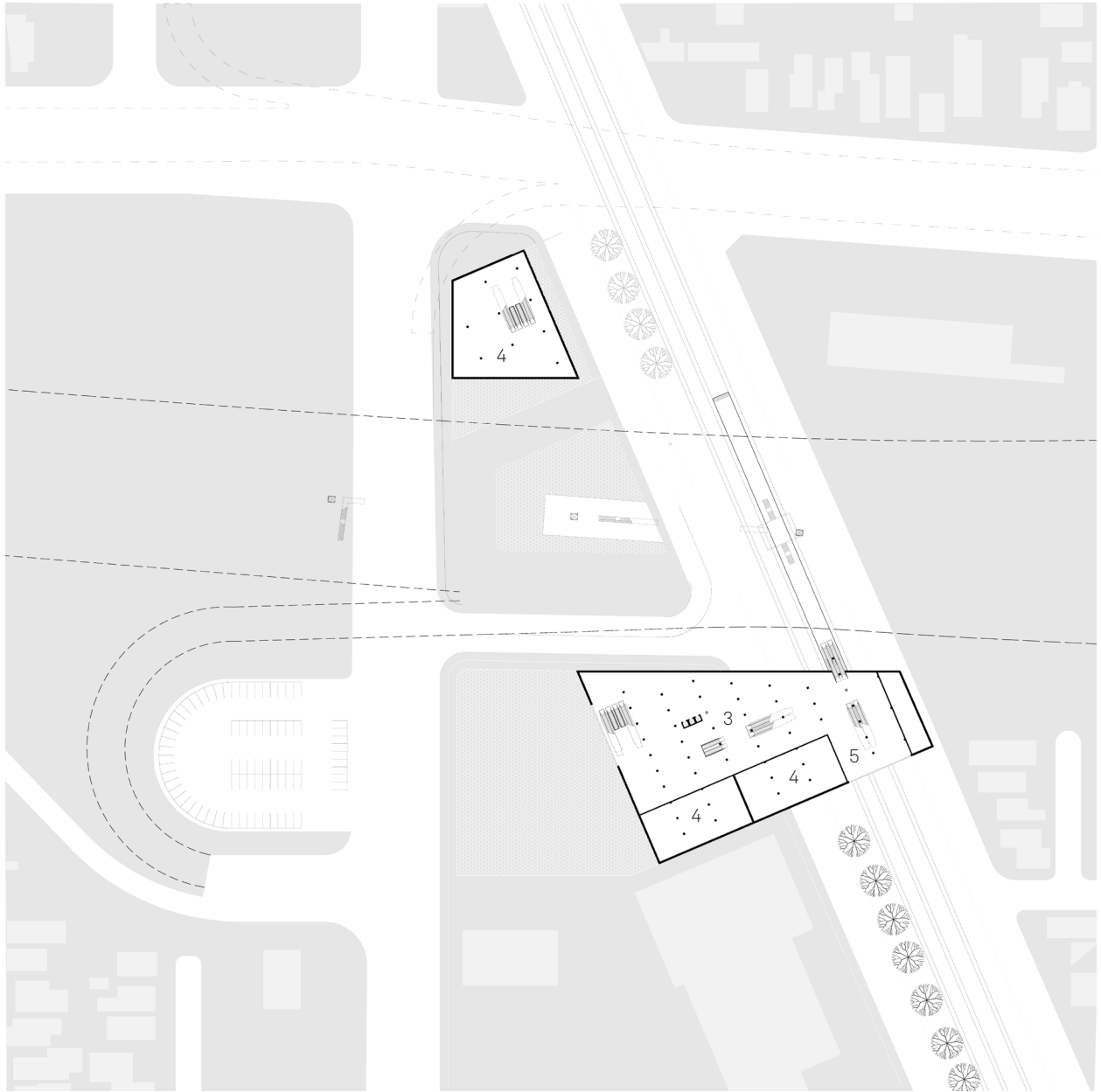


Figure 52: Crossing: Level 2 Plan

- 3 covered waiting area
- 4 commerce
- 5 viewing platform

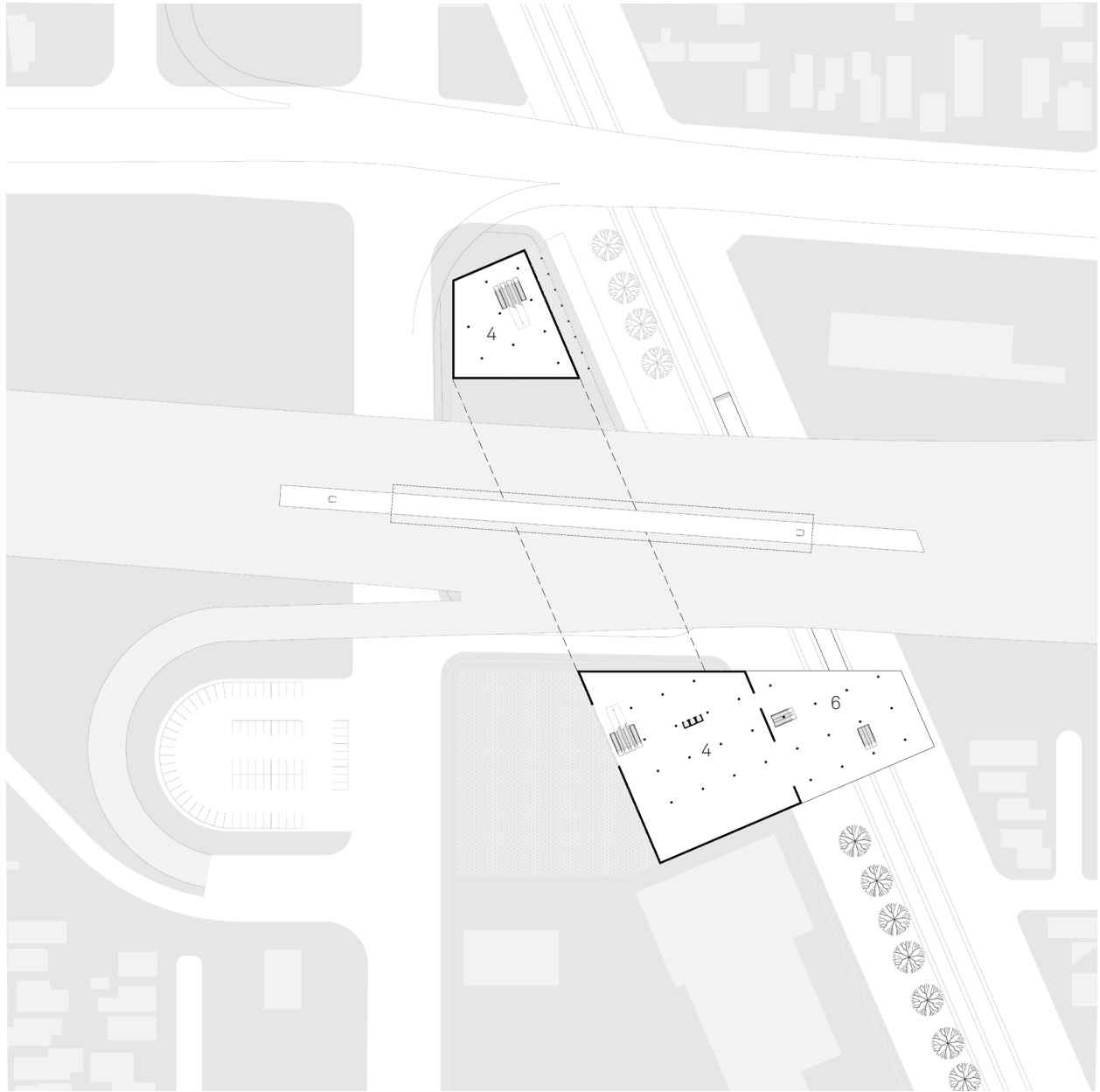


Figure 53: Crossing: Level 3 Plan

4 commerce
6 outdoor area

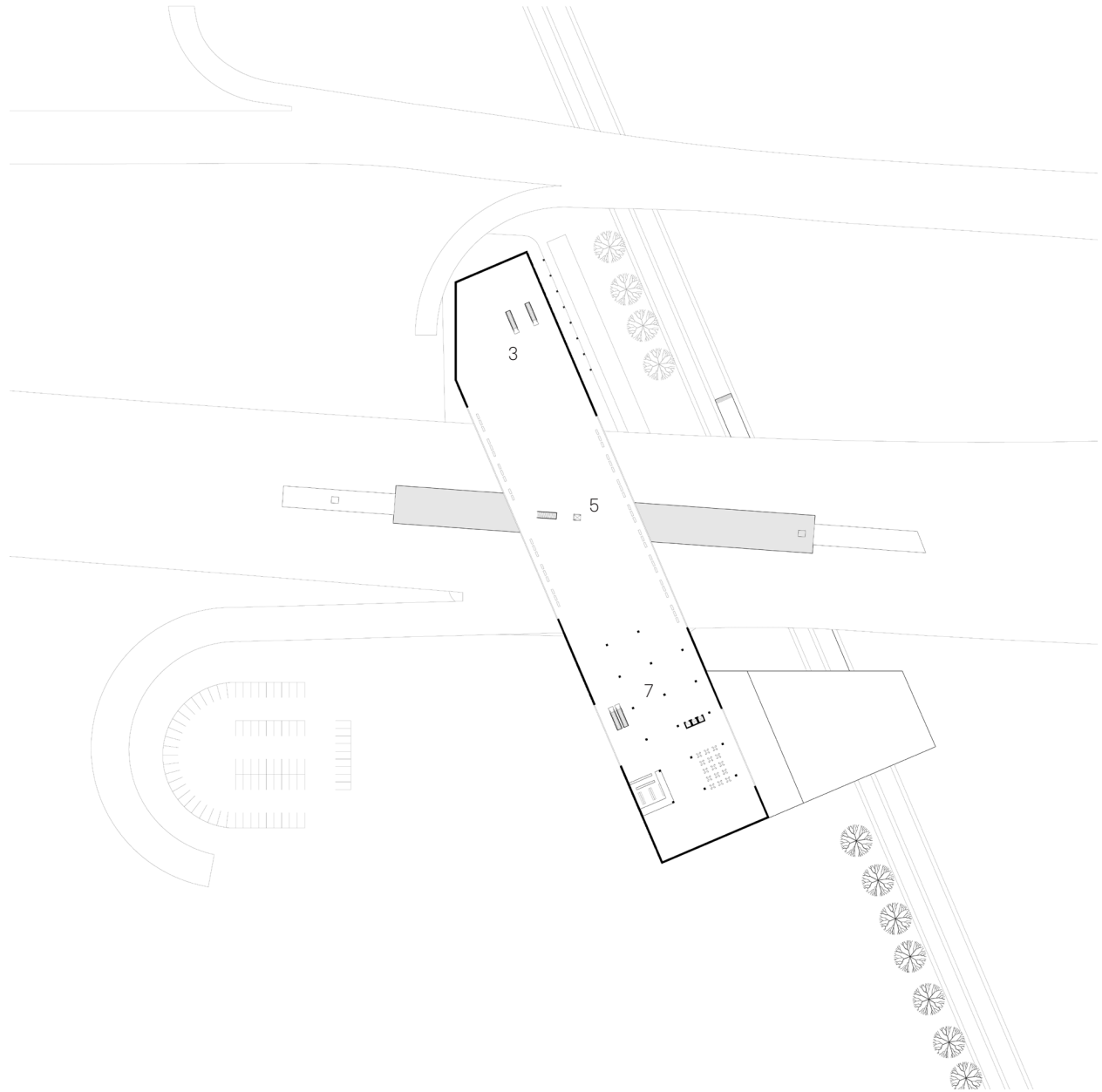


Figure 54: Crossing: Top Level Plan

- 3 covered waiting area
- 5 viewing platform
- 7 café

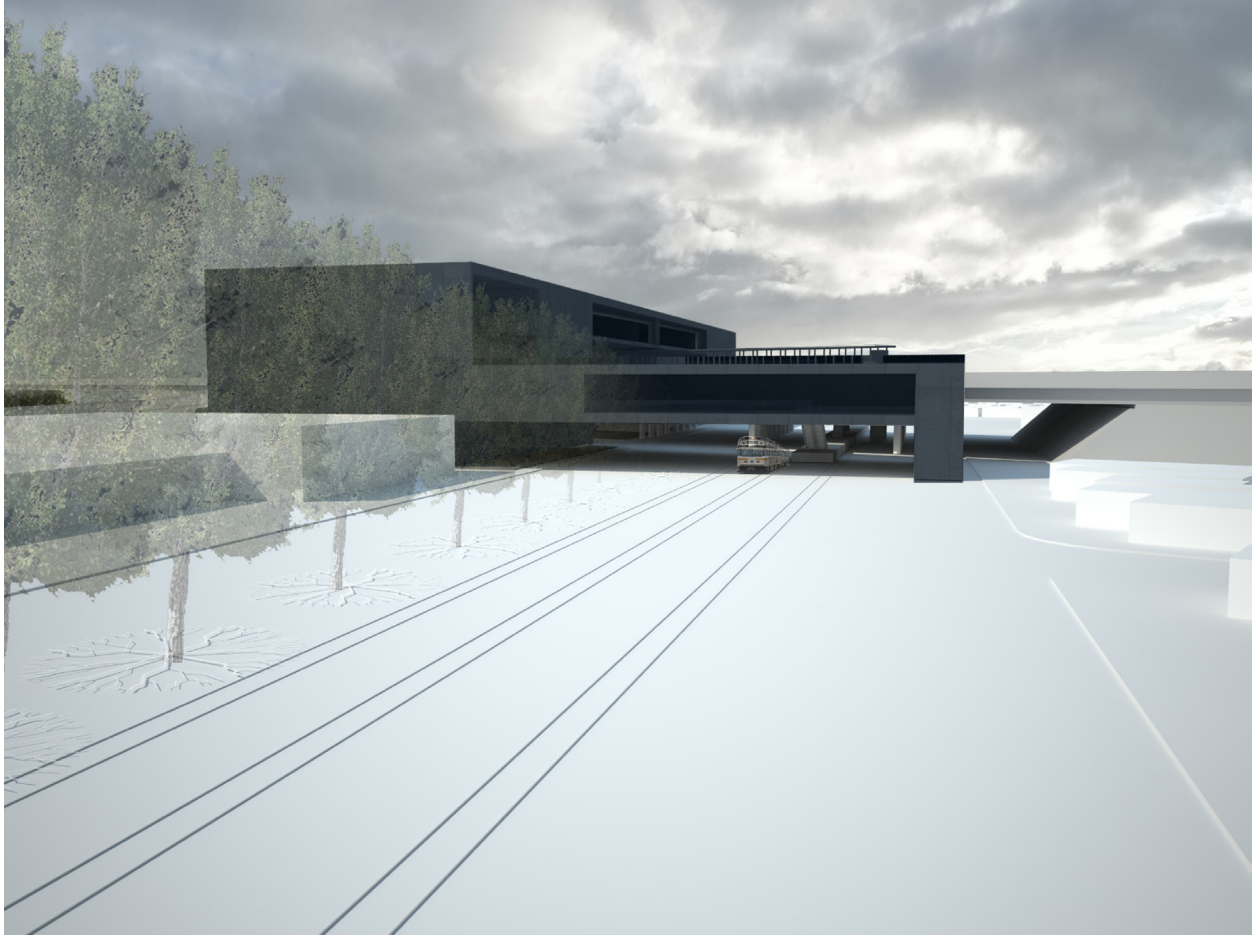


Figure 55: Perspective of proposed crossing. The new building connects the Blue Line to the nearby strip mall, and provides viewing and sheltered areas for waiting passengers.

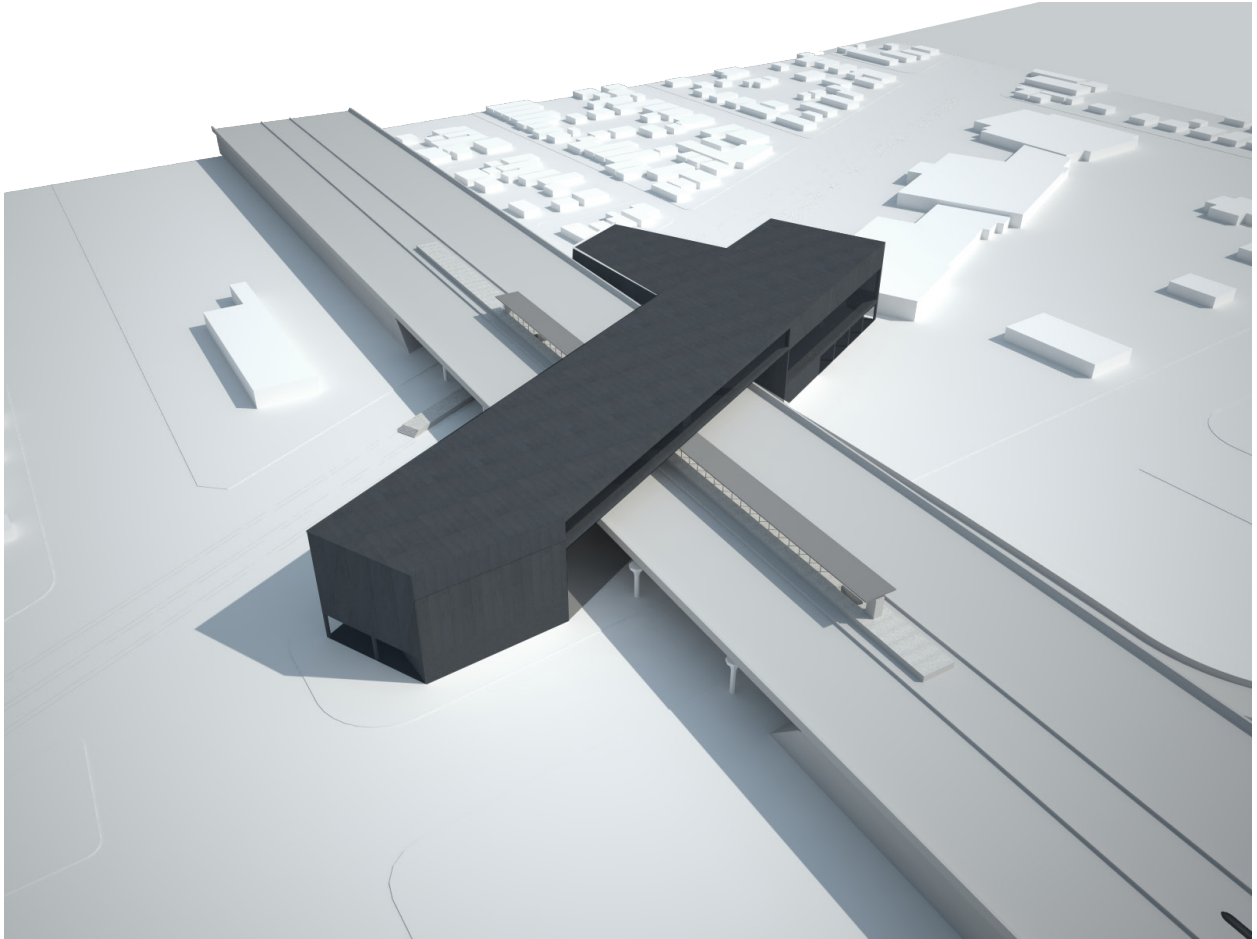


Figure 56: Aerial view from northwest.



Figure 57: Panoramic view of existing site, from Florence Ave. Image compiled from Google Streetview (Accessed April 2012).

Condition 3: The Node

Florence stop on the Blue Line, neighborhood scale

The node as a typology provides the opportunity to consider interventions and the nature of the micro-public space at the scale of the neighborhood. Whether a bus or a train station, the node is the interface between a community and the larger public transport system network, between an individual community and the system that physically and functionally connects it to the rest of the city.

At this scale, the intervention must demonstrate its flexibility and adaptability for local conditions as it interfaces with the various neighborhoods they connect. Some neighborhoods might require a childcare facility or a grocery store adjacent to the station, while others might require nothing more than a better-sheltered waiting area and access to neighborhood bulletins. At this scale, the MUP is less involved in programming, while the local community takes charge of information and programming.

The analysis of this particular site—the Florence stop on the Blue Line in the South Gate/Huntington Park neighborhood—reveals that the train tracks, running north-south, physically divide this community. In this area, the opportunities to cross the tracks happen alongside major vehicular streets, and where they are spaced too far apart, there are enclosed, metal pedestrian bridges are provided for east-west connections. These bridges look like metal cages. In this site, the stop is located in a primarily residential area, with a commercial corridor (Florence Avenue) running east-west. To access the boarding platform, a pedestrian must enter the tracks from the middle of the street. On the platform itself there is a roof to provide shade. Adjacent to the platform is a parking lot and a neighborhood park.

In this instance, the intent of the design intervention is smaller, yet still intended as a way to open up this space for the community's use and its exposure to the system. Rather than a space that is only visited in passing, with people moving out of there as quickly as possible, the node has the possibility to host other programs that bring the community to itself and the system to the community. It can also have a street frontage, as an architectural presence to announce the transportation system, while also providing space for community activities. This node currently supports only the functions of waiting for the train, and boarding the train. It can be a place of exchange of information, even lingering for the neighborhood, and for visitors. In this design, a part of the existing parking lot is converted into a landscaped plaza that can be a space for waiting or for lingering. On weekends when the parking lot is less in demand, this space can support farmer's markets or flea markets. By giving the station a dual transportation and community

program, the L.A. Metro can strengthen its connection to the community, by providing a space for its own mobility functions but also by allowing that space to support and contribute to the life of the community.

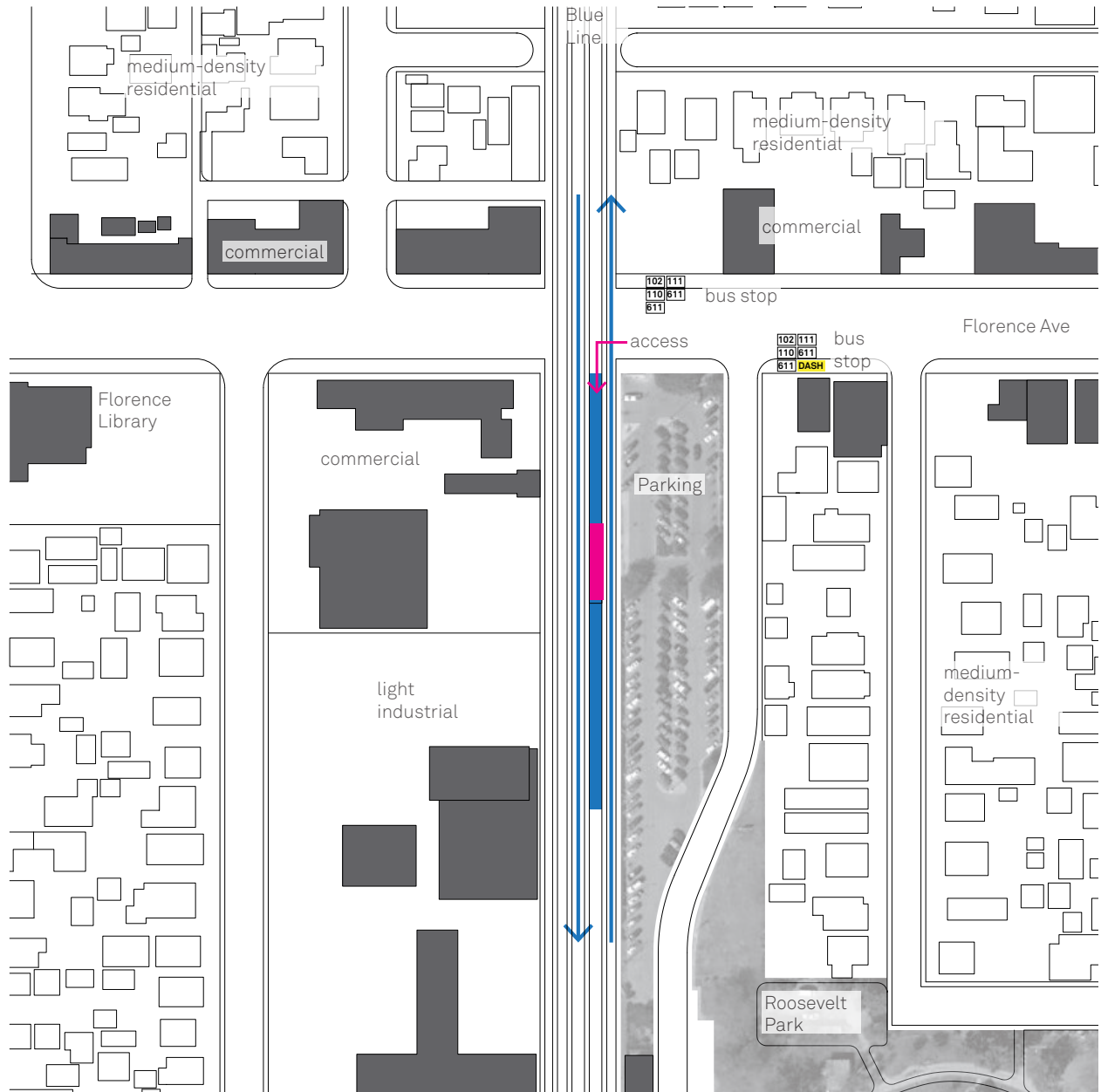


Figure 58: Node: Analysis of existing site. In order to access the boarding platform, a pedestrian must enter through the center of the street and rails. The station itself is minimally sheltered. There is a parking lot adjacent to the site.

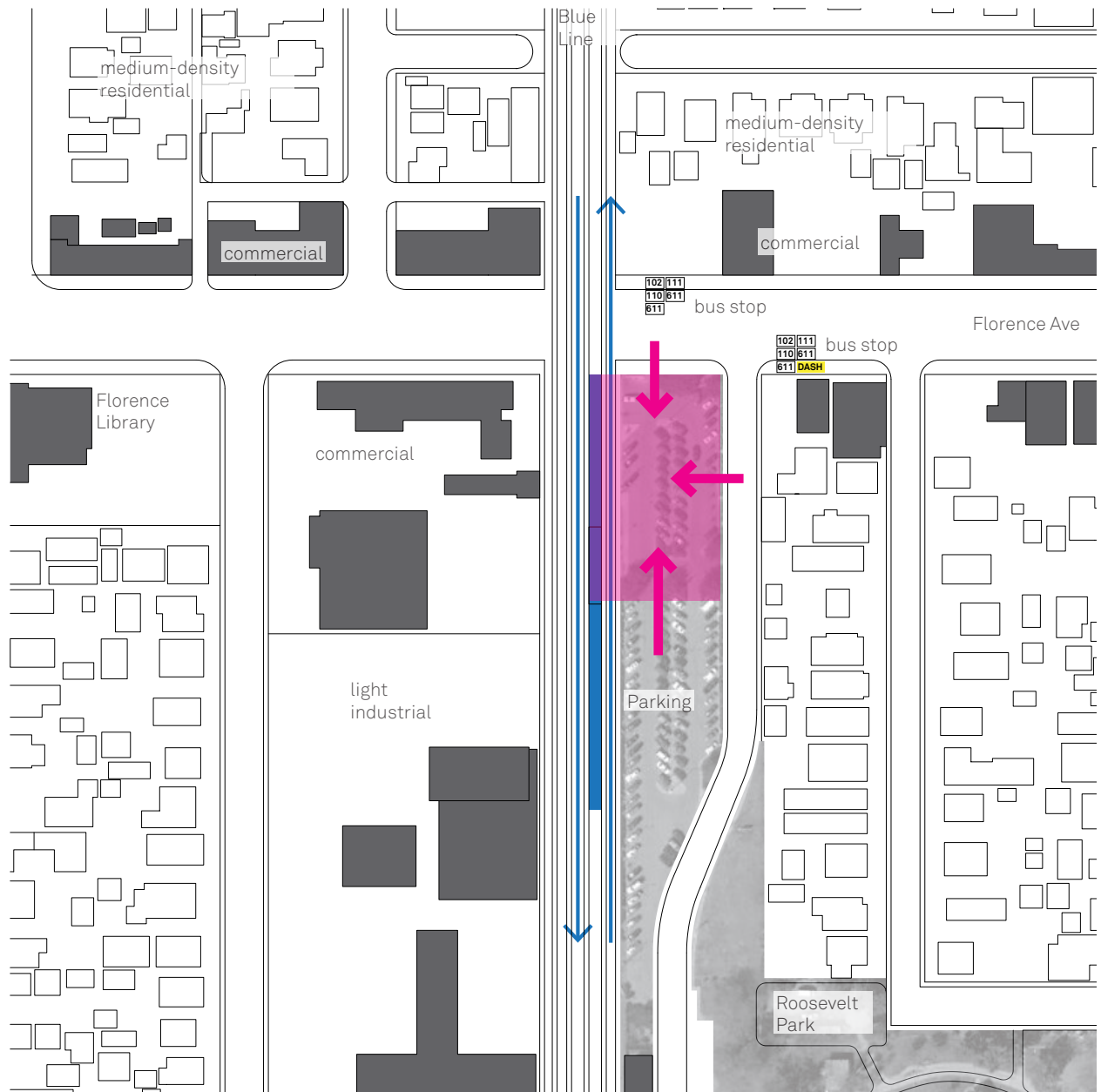


Figure 59: Node: Design Intent for Site: Expand the node by giving the station a street presence, and open it up for more community gathering and temporary activities.

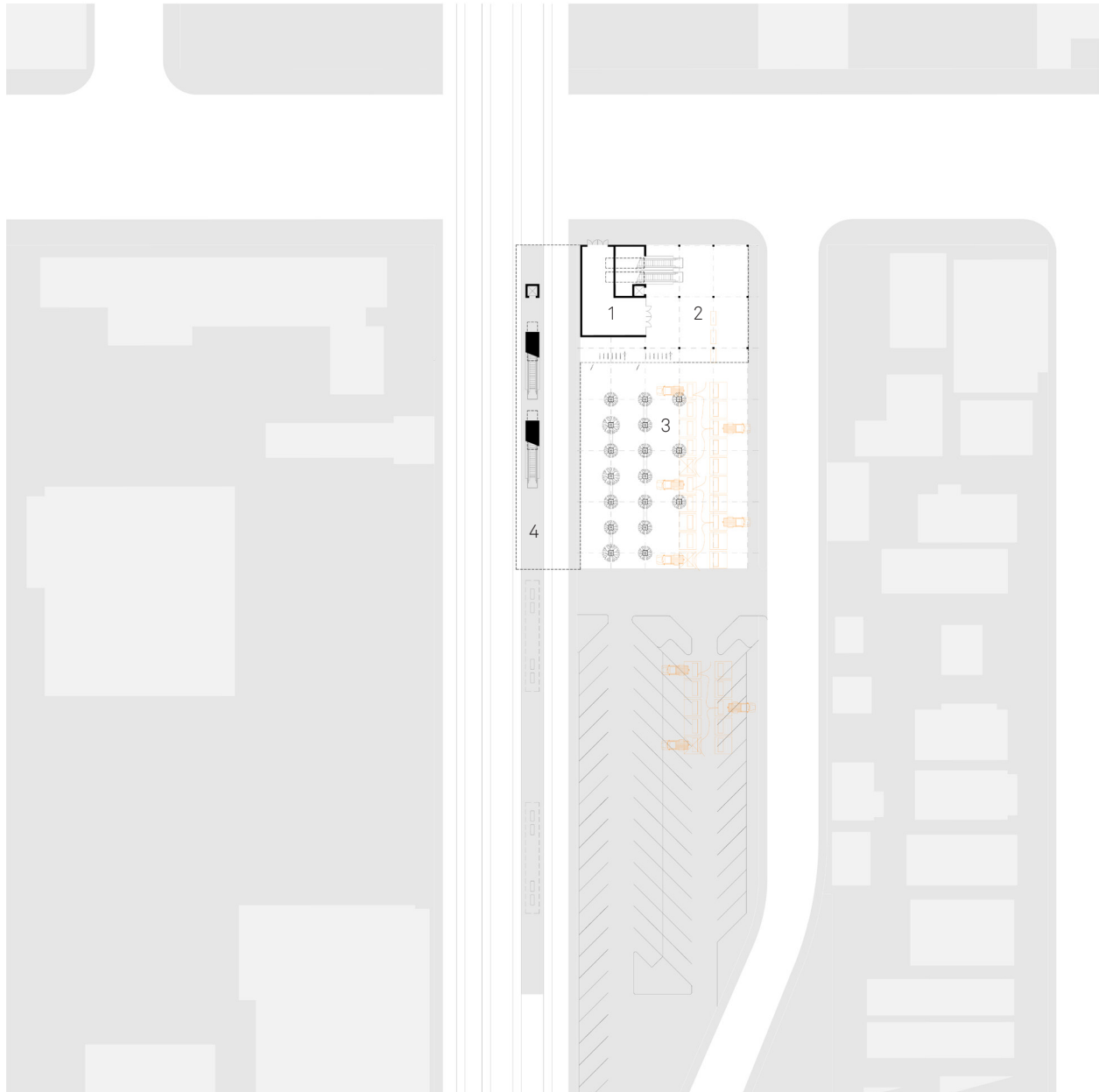


Figure 60: Node: New Ground Floor plan

- 1 café
- 2 plaza
- 3 landscaped plaza
- 4 covered platform

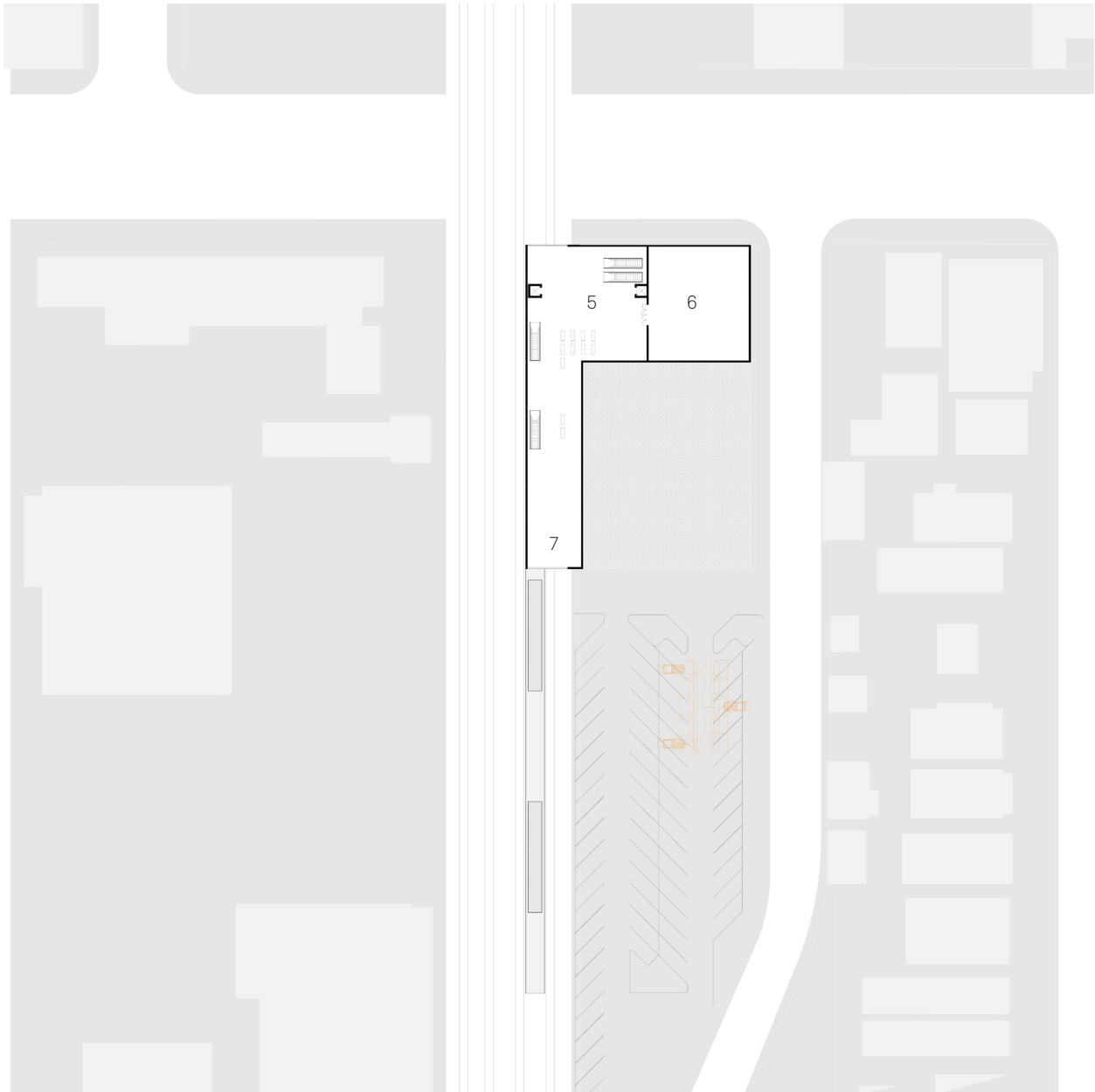


Figure 61: Node: New Upper Level Plan

- 5 sheltered viewing and waiting platform
- 6 retail or community space
- 7 viewing platform



Figure 62: View from Florence Ave. By giving the station an architectural frontage to the street, the site announces itself as a “place” in the neighborhood.

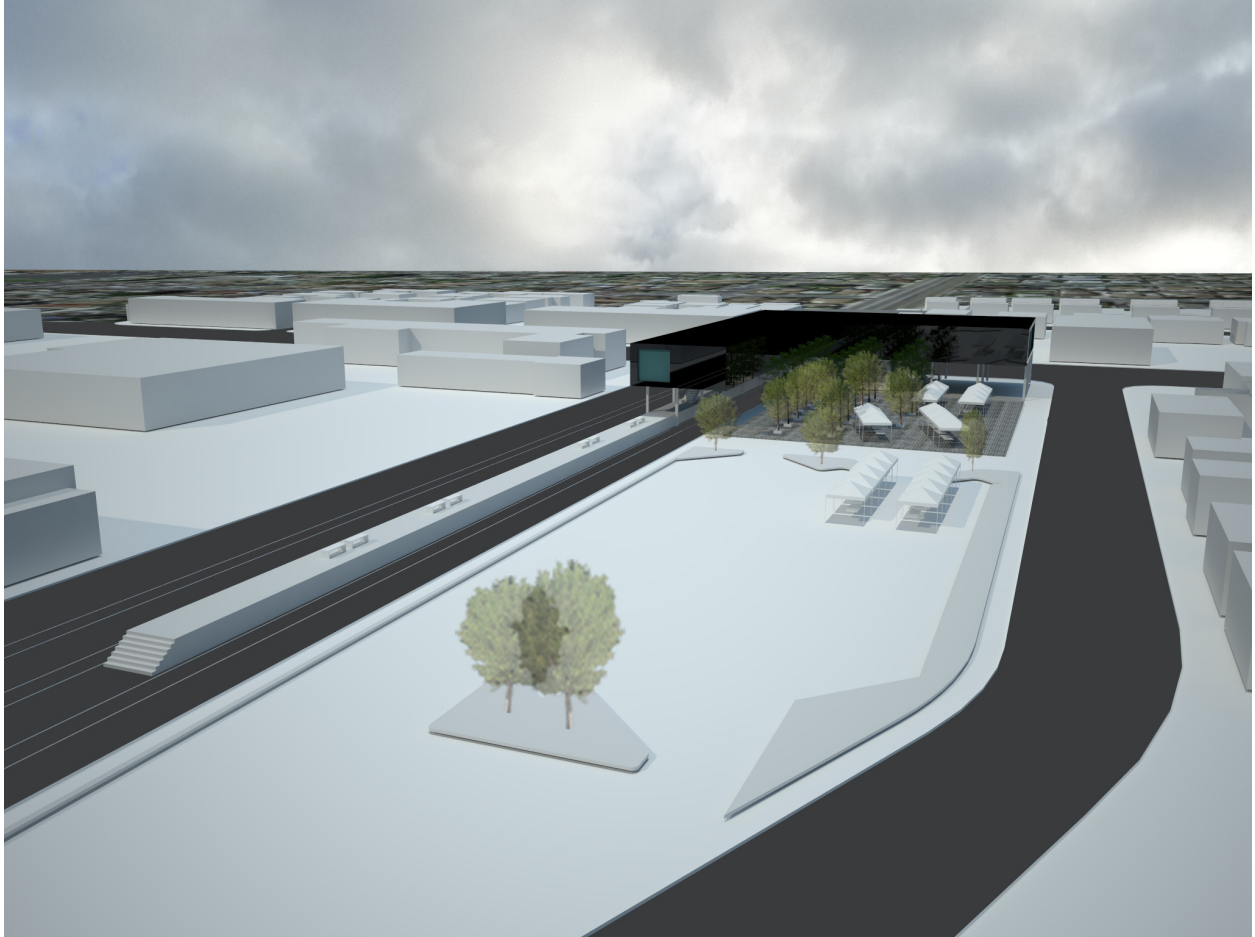


Figure 63: View from southeast. Taking over a portion of the existing parking lot, the site can accommodate temporary and community-oriented activities, such as farmer's markets and spaces for residents to gather and socialize.

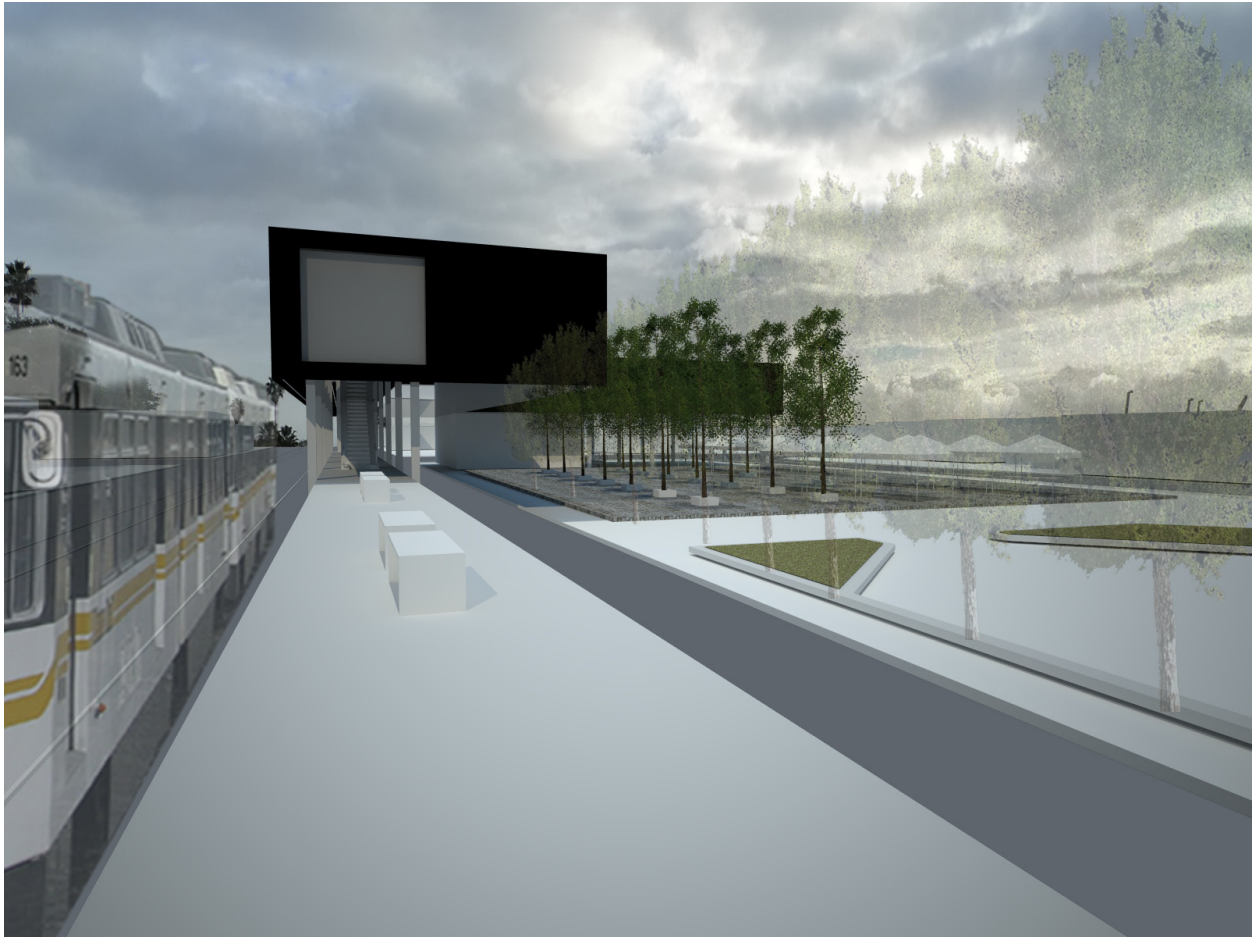


Figure 64: View from Blue Line Platform. Metro riders can exit from the station as easily as they currently do, but they can also choose to go upstairs to use the community or retail spaces, or to linger in the landscaped plaza before going home.



Figure 65: The landscaped plaza can host farmer's markets, useful to Metro riders and also making the site itself more visible and therefore used by community residents.



Figure 66: View of existing site from on-ramp to 110 Harbor Freeway. Image compiled from Google Streetview (Accessed Apr 2012).

Condition 4: The Terminus

The Artesia Transit Center, a Park & Ride site

The terminus, or the end of the line, is the seam between the system and the periphery, between the public mass transit and the private automobile, and the urban and the sub- or ex-urban condition. There are numerous architectural typologies based on the mediation of that difference – the tollhouse, the city gate, the arch – each with its own rich history. The gate, as a structure that signal the entry to the city itself, also hosts other programs that indoctrinates the body into the order of the city, such as a legal court (in ancient biblical times), collection of taxes (pre-Revolution Paris, some by Claude Nicholas Ledoux), and the beginning of the ceremonial procession (traditional Chinese city design).

But as the terminus of the Metro Silver Line, this site is currently a vast and forlorn no-man’s-land. It is a parking lot crossed with electric power lines and visited every few minutes by buses dropping off passengers. The parking lot itself is inadequately used. Nestled in the southwest corner of the 110 and 91 Freeway interchange, the Artesia Transit Center is hardly a “center” at all but really just a bus turnaround traffic island, and is perceptually and functionally isolated from its surroundings. In its general vicinity are big-box retail (a Home Depot), some low-density housing, and light industrial complexes to the east, none of which are accessible or even perceptible from the site. Also adjacent to the site is a tributary river, concrete-lined as all water bodies in Los Angeles tend to be, with the requisite nursery on its bank. That, too, is imperceptible and inaccessible from the site.

As a terminus to the Silver Line, this site has the potential to act as an introduction to the transportation system, as a gateway to the public realm and the city itself. It mediates the transition from the private realm of the private automobile to the public realm of mass transport and the urban mindset. This site can be thought of as a micro-version of the city in the periphery, as an extension and a representation of the city as an ambassador to the periphery. The proposed design hybridizes the idea of the gate, with recreational and commercial program. In this instance, the gate provides recreation opportunities for commuters, as well as retail and temporary activities.



Figure 68: Waiting area for bus transfers



Figure 69: Path to parking



Figure 70: View toward parking lot from traffic island and bus turnaround



Figure 67: Shelters for waiting in parking lot, with freeway beyond

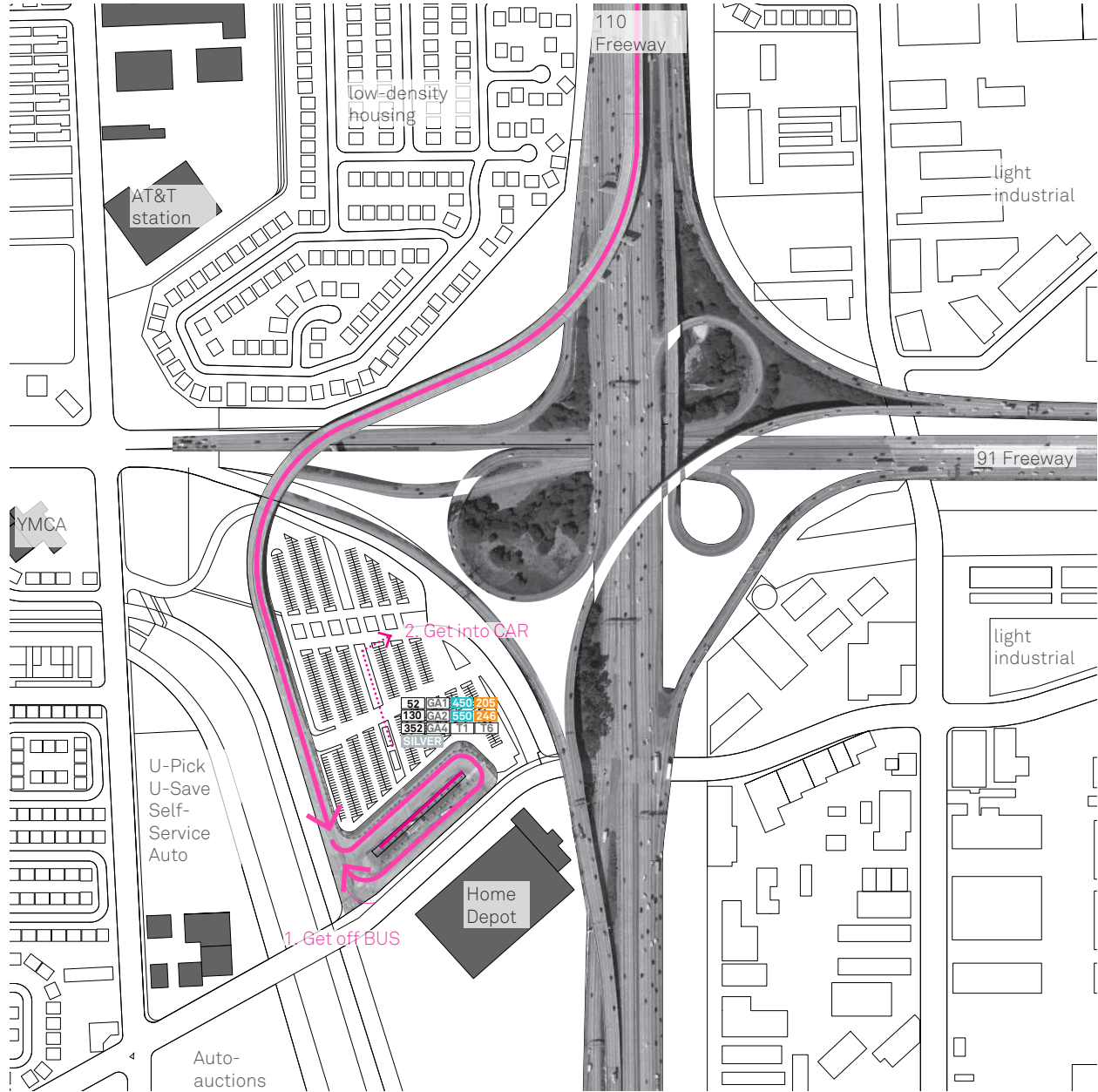


Figure 71: Terminus: Analysis of existing condition: The site is located in a corner between the 110 and the 91 freeways. The 91 Freeway also terminates at this site. Whatever features are nearby are imperceptible and inaccessible from the site.

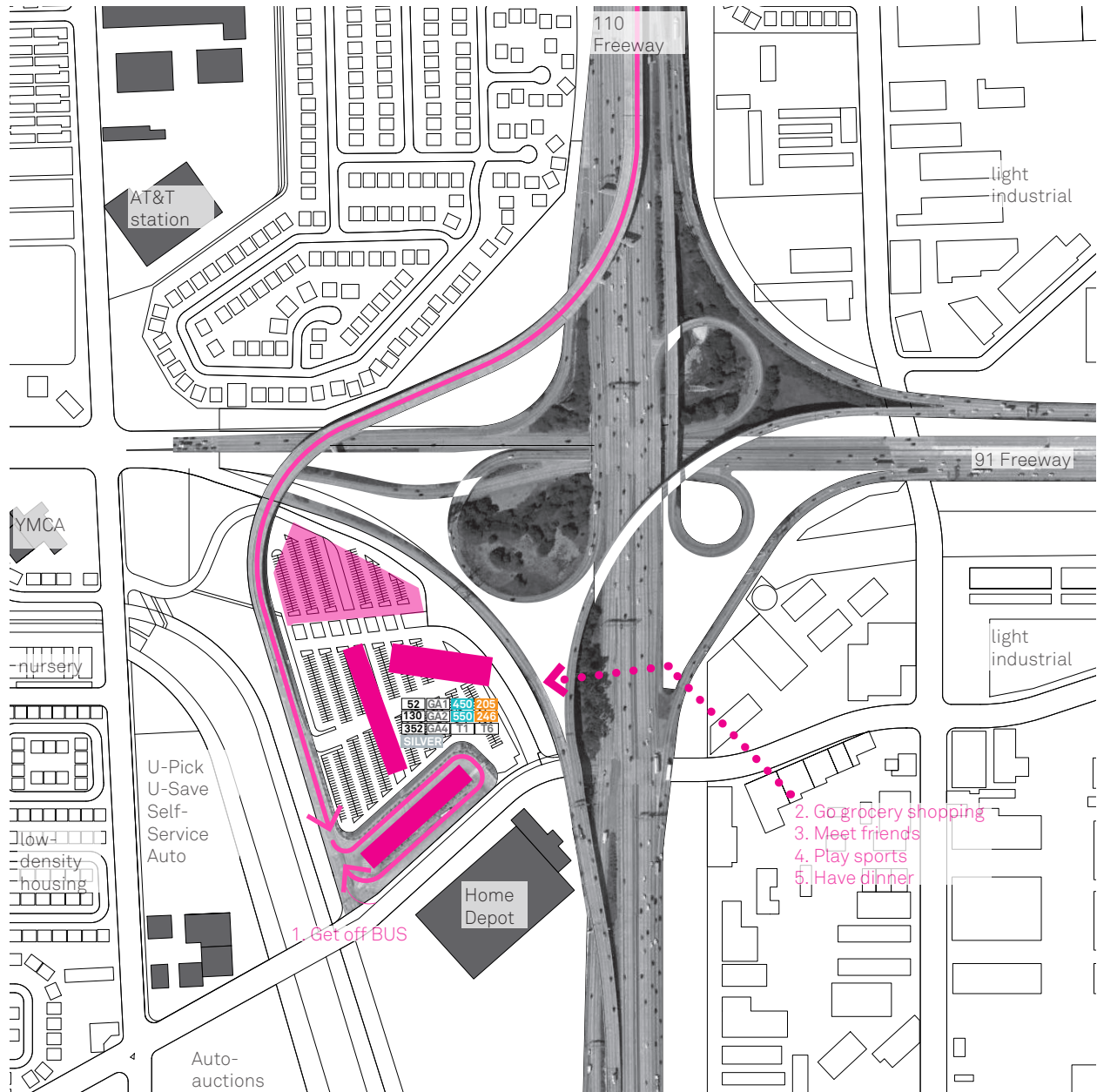


Figure 72: Terminus: Design Intent for Site: As the gateway between the public and the private, this site can host a variety of activities, ranging from quotidian errand-running to more leisure activities. It can serve as an intermediary between the public system and the suburban condition.

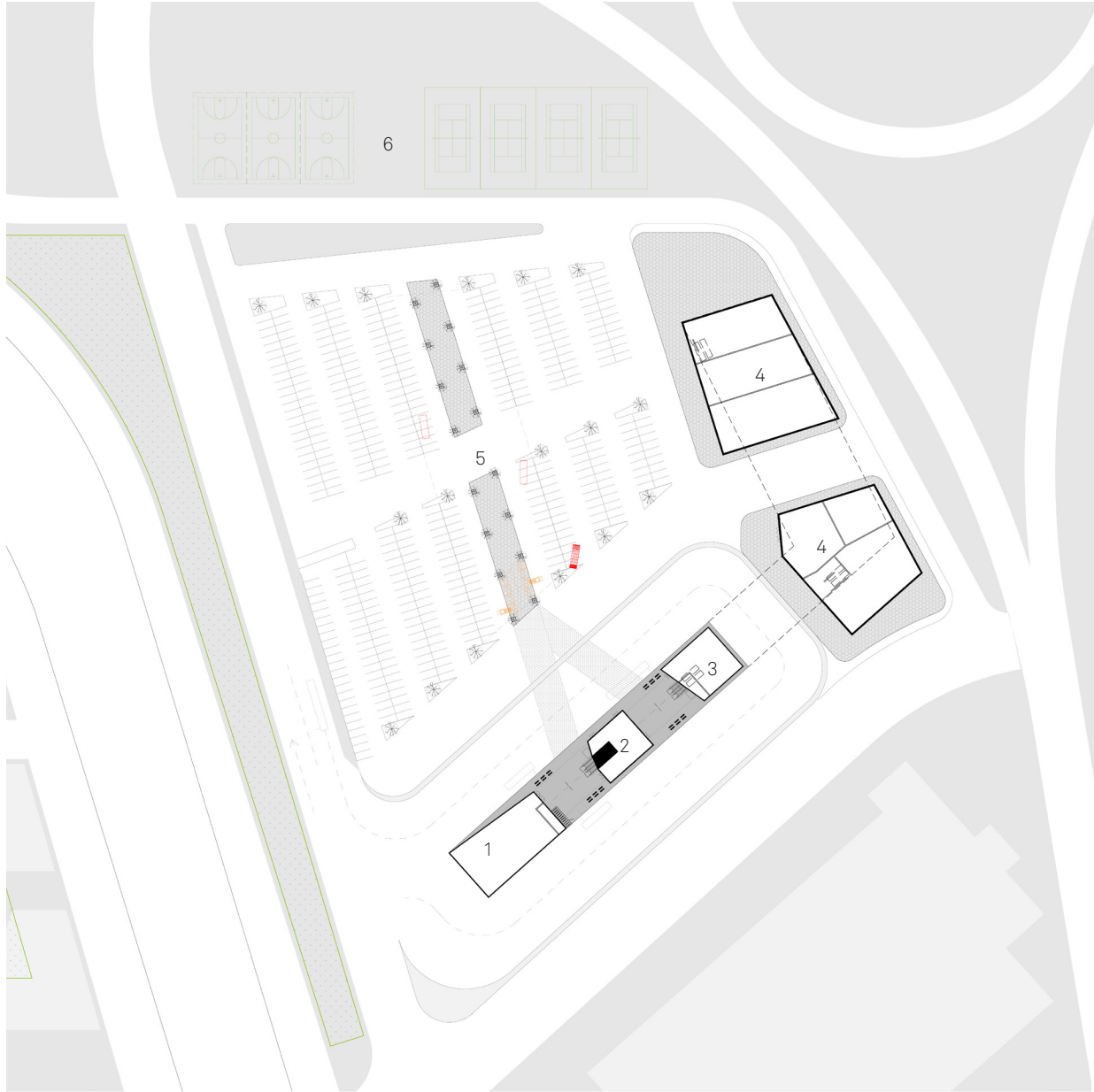


Figure 73: Terminus: Ground Floor Plan

- 1 supermarket
- 2 retail
- 3 restaurant/café
- 4 commercial
- 5 promenade (temporary activities)
- 6 sports fields

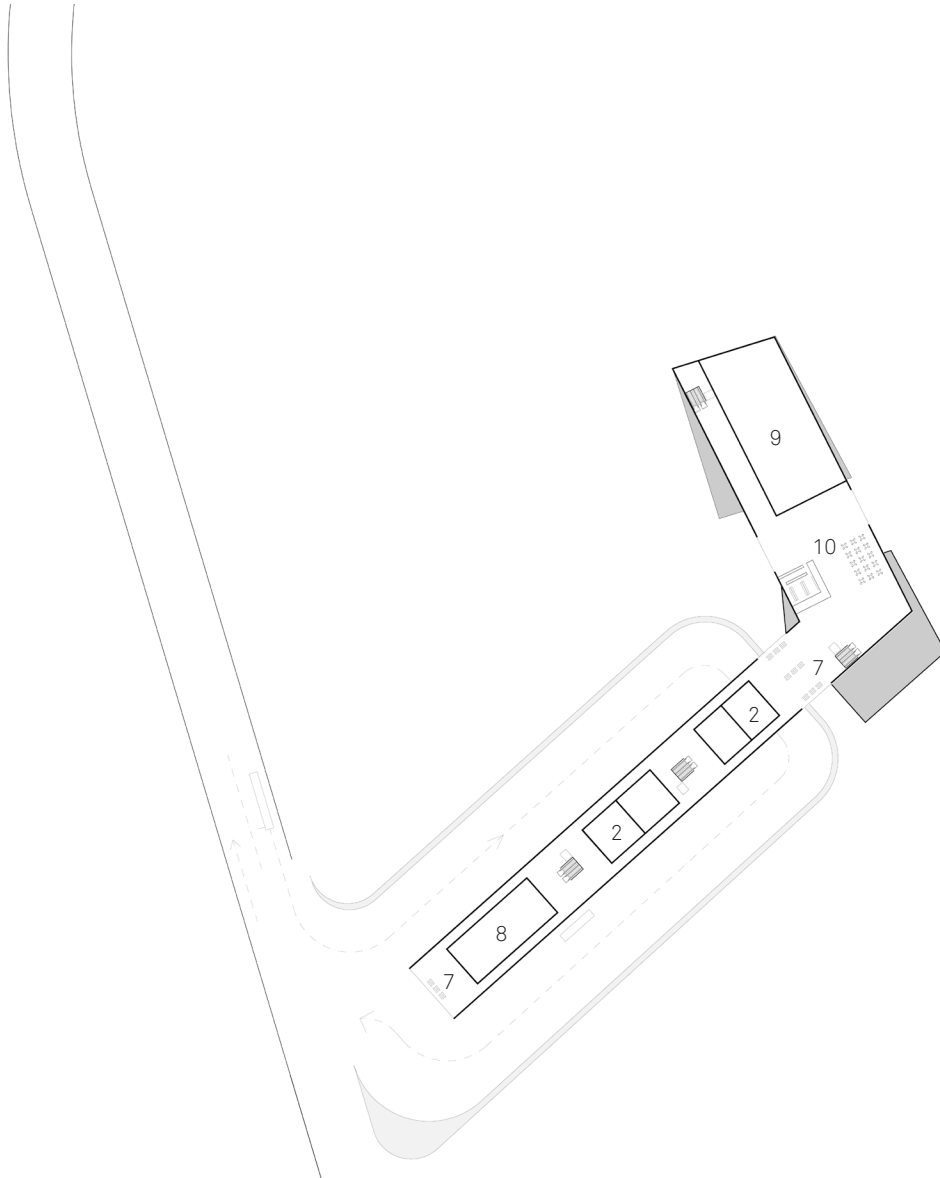


Figure 74: Terminus: Upper Level Plan

- 7 covered waiting and viewing area
- 8 community spaces
- 9 recreational spaces
- 10 café

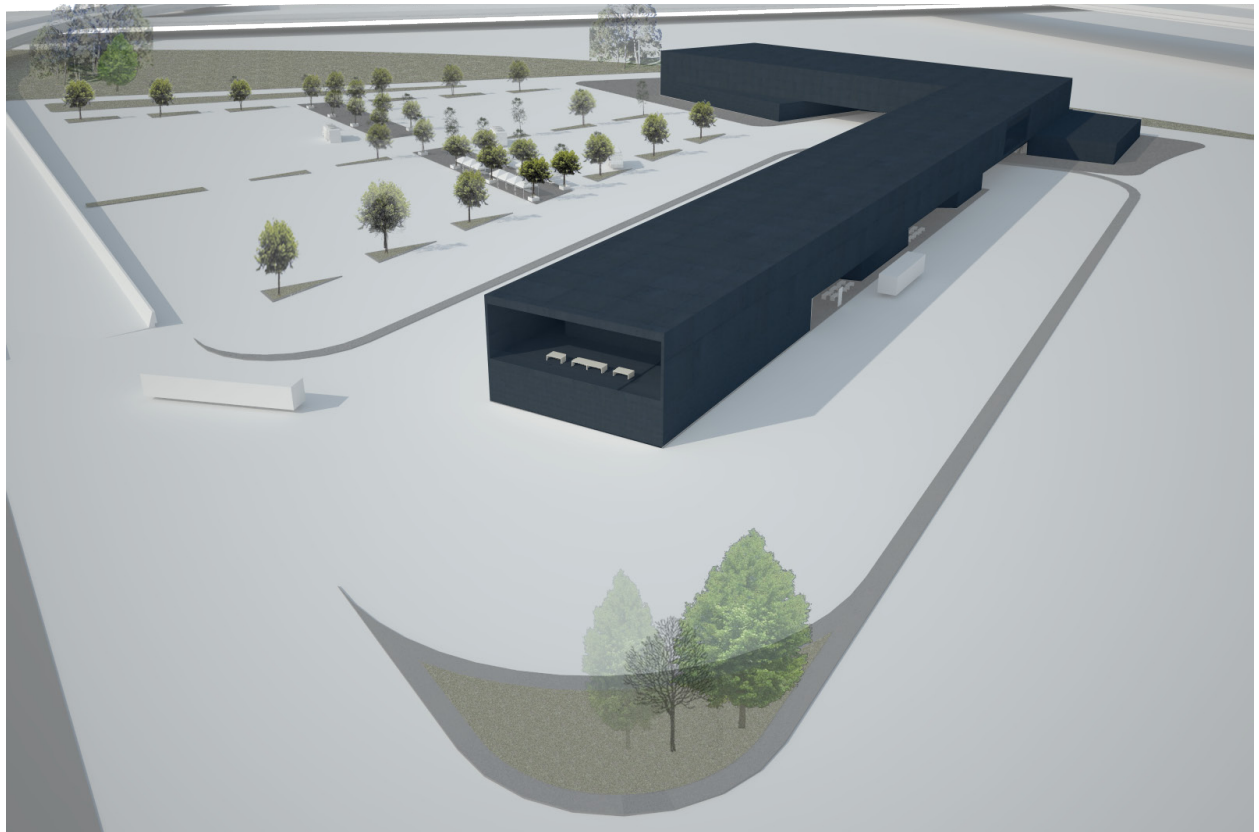


Figure 75: View of new terminus building, from southwest.



Figure 76: As the link between the urban and the ex-urban, the gateway can host a number of useful programs in and around itself, such as a farmer's market, shown above.

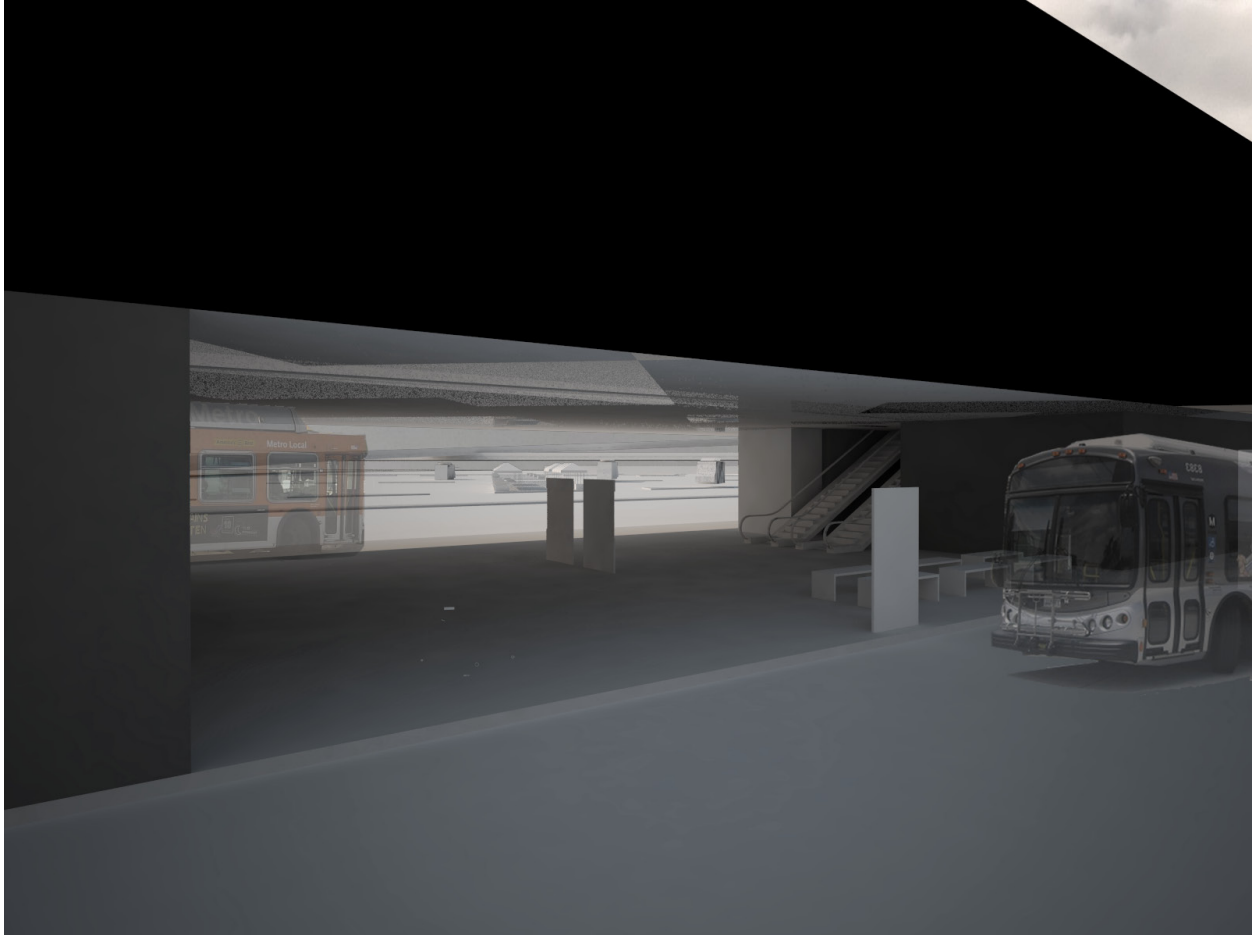


Figure 77: View of station from bus stops. As buses drop off and pick up passengers, the Metro users can wait in well-sheltered areas, or to run errands in the supermarket or the temporary farmer's market. They can also go upstairs for community space, entertainment, recreation, and lingering.

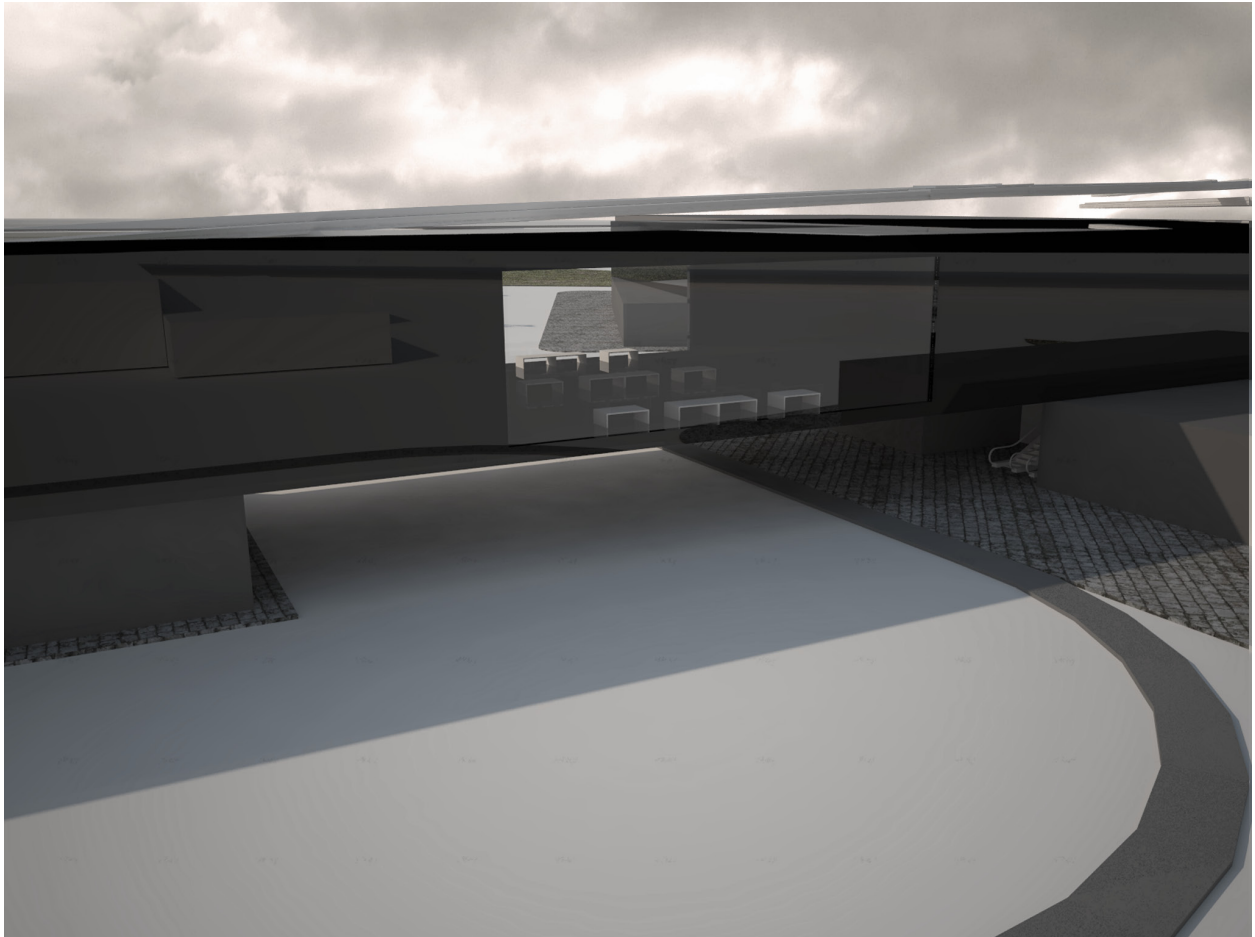


Figure 78: View of bridge across bus turnaround. The upper level provides a space from which to wait, and to view the transportation system as a piece of a whole system to which this part belongs.

Conclusions & Projections

This thesis proposes a way with which Los Angeles could move toward a more urban (programmatically diverse, more accommodating of differences) future, not through a wholesale rejection and scrapping of its current configuration, but by incrementally changing the nature of a public infrastructure – the transportation system – to be micro-publics where the seams are expanded.

Looming behind the premise of this thesis is the question: Is social justice and a society’s ability to deal with difference and othernesses really a design problem? For now, it is a cautious and partial yes. While I acknowledge that architecture is really peripheral in this larger discourse, this thesis is an attempt to imagine how design interventions might work against the dominant economical, social and political forces that shape today’s cities, as not just an instrument of governmentality but also a means to move society toward inclusiveness and the successful navigation of many different identities in a heterogeneous society. This thesis proposes that by injecting the existing system with a network of micro-publics, architects can also play a role in helping the region toward an urban civic identity and practice as intimately tied to the physical and formal conditions of the city.

At the time of this writing, the L.A. Metro is unveiling six visions for the Union Station in Los Angeles, with submissions by such architectural powerhouses as Foster + Partners, Grimshaw Architects, NBBJ, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, Ten Arquitectos, UNStudio, EE&K (Perkins Eastman), and West 8. Mayor and Metro Board Chair Antonio Villaraigosa recognizes the potential of the transportation system to catalyze a transformation of the region, changing “‘from the city of congestion and sprawl’ to a city with increased mass-transit options and a commitment to environmental sustainability.”¹ While undoubtedly there is reason and incentive to throw architectural talent at designing a new shiny emblem of sustainable technology fit to house the new California high-speed rail project, there is also an opportunity to consider the concentration of human and cultural capital in a region like Los Angeles. From this perspective, a dispersed and systematic approach to addressing the programmatic potentials of the region, in all their diversity, may offer the bigger opportunity. That is what I have attempted here.

This proposal hinges on the wager that a common civic identity for a city may be forged through investment in a public infrastructure, by making it a common and democratic point of pride, interest, and wide usage in the Los Angeles region. Los Angeles is an agglomeration of different communities, but these communities might be made connected and more accessible to each other through this public utility. By giving the system a recognizable formal icon and a pattern of usage, the system can provide real entry points and spaces of exposure and interaction for these currently disparate and isolated parts. The programs will vary by sites, but the entire city can be connected via a recognizable public realm, and variations of that space. This can create a new public realm in the urban fabric and pattern of life in Los Angeles.

1 Christopher Hawthorne, “Star architects unveil wild plans for Union Station circa 2050,” *Los Angeles Times Online*, April 26, 2012, available at <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/26/entertainment/la-et-union-station-20120425>, (Accessed 7 May 2012).

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