The Next Great American Station

Union Station and Downtown Los Angeles in the Twenty-First Century

by

Jaymes Phillip Dunsmore
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on May 24, 2012 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in City Planning.

Abstract

Ideas about a city are powerful forces, and have lasting impacts on the built environment. While not every vision is realized in the built form, every aspect of urban development is the reflection of a vision about what the city should be. This is especially true in Los Angeles. Today, the ideas and trends that shaped the development of that city, and many American metropolises, in the twentieth century are falling away, presenting the opportunity for new visions of downtown development and civic space to take form. This work seeks to understand the origins and effects of past visions for Downtown Los Angeles, critique the potential of current visions, and propose new ideas for urban development and public space, using the concepts of civic space and convergence as lenses and Los Angeles Union Station as a focal point.

This work is divided into three parts. The first explores the visions and trends that shaped Los Angeles in the twentieth century and their influence on the city today. The second looks at current and emerging trends that are likely to inform the growth of the city in the twenty-first century, which suggest a new type of city is emerging: one in which economic activity, transportation networks and the city's cultures converge downtown. From this study, and an examination of two cities influenced by those trends (London and New York), are derived design principles for transit-oriented civic space networks in city centers. The third part narrows in on Union Station as a site, taking those principles and applying them to create a scenario for the future development of the station area, which is in part a projection of the current and emerging trends and in part an act of imagination, leaping beyond the status quo to envision a better city which does not yet exist, but could. In the conceptual design presented here, Union Station serves three important functions as both a gateway and a destination, a link between the city's past and future, and a cultural crossroads. The station becomes a focal element in a new model for urban development: the convergent city, in which Downtown Los Angeles is not the focus of everyday life, but reemerges as the center of civic life.

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Biographical Note

Jaymes is a planner and urban designer who recently completed a Master in City Planning and Certificate in Urban Design at MIT's Department Studies and Planning (DUSP). During his time at MIT, he has worked on planning and design projects for a wide range of real-world clients, including Vanke China; the City of Newton, Massachusetts; the MIT Investment Management Corporation; and, Walt Disney Imagineering. Most recently, Jaymes was one of twelve students selected from the School of Architecture and Planning to travel to China to work on the master planning of a 600-acre site outside of Tianjin.

He has professional experience working for California cities both large and small. Last summer, he was awarded a Paul and Priscilla Gray Internship Grant by the MIT Public Service Center for his work on transit-oriented district planning at the City of Los Angeles Urban Design Studio. Prior to coming to MIT, Jaymes worked for the City of San Leandro Community Development Department, where he helped to draft the city's first climate action plan, and for the East Bay Regional Park District.

His interest in planning and design developed while he was an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in History, with high distinction, and a Minor in City and Regional Planning in 2010. His undergraduate thesis examined the transformation of San Francisco's waterfront in twentieth century—chronicling the decline of shipping and the rise of a tourist-based economy—and exploring the effects of those changes on the city. While at UC Berkeley, Jaymes served on the Board of Directors of the Berkeley Students Cooperative—the nation's largest student housing cooperative—which provides affordable housing to over 1300 student members.

A native of California, Jaymes grew up in rural Sonoma County, where he was active with the Boy Scouts of America, earning the rank of Eagle Scout in 2006. He enjoys exploring cities, as well as rowing, hiking, and skiing.

“Make no little plans: they have no magic to stir men’s blood, and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work.”

— Daniel Burnham

This work is dedicated to all the wonderful teachers that I have had—both in and out of the classroom—who have encouraged me to make big plans and aim high, with special thanks to the following:

Prof. Dennis Frenchman, who served as my academic advisor and thesis supervisor, inspired me with his sheer brilliance as a designer and urban observer, never doubted my ability to succeed. and always lifted me up with his unfailing good cheer;

Prof. Robert Fogelson, who served as my thesis reader, and whose works *Downtown* and *The Fragmented Metropolis* greatly informed my understanding of Los Angeles;

Prof. Richard Walker, who opened my eyes to the rich history of California's cities and first introduced me to Carey McWilliams's *Southern California*;

Simon Pastucha, who showed me Los Angeles from within City Hall, and whose work makes the city a better place;

Sally Barros, and the planning staff of the City of San Leandro, who introduced me to the practice of city planning in local government and embody the best of the profession;

Hal Roa, my high school drafting teacher, who taught me to draw and so much more;

Bill Olzman, my high school English teacher, who taught me to write clearly and critically, and always believed in me;

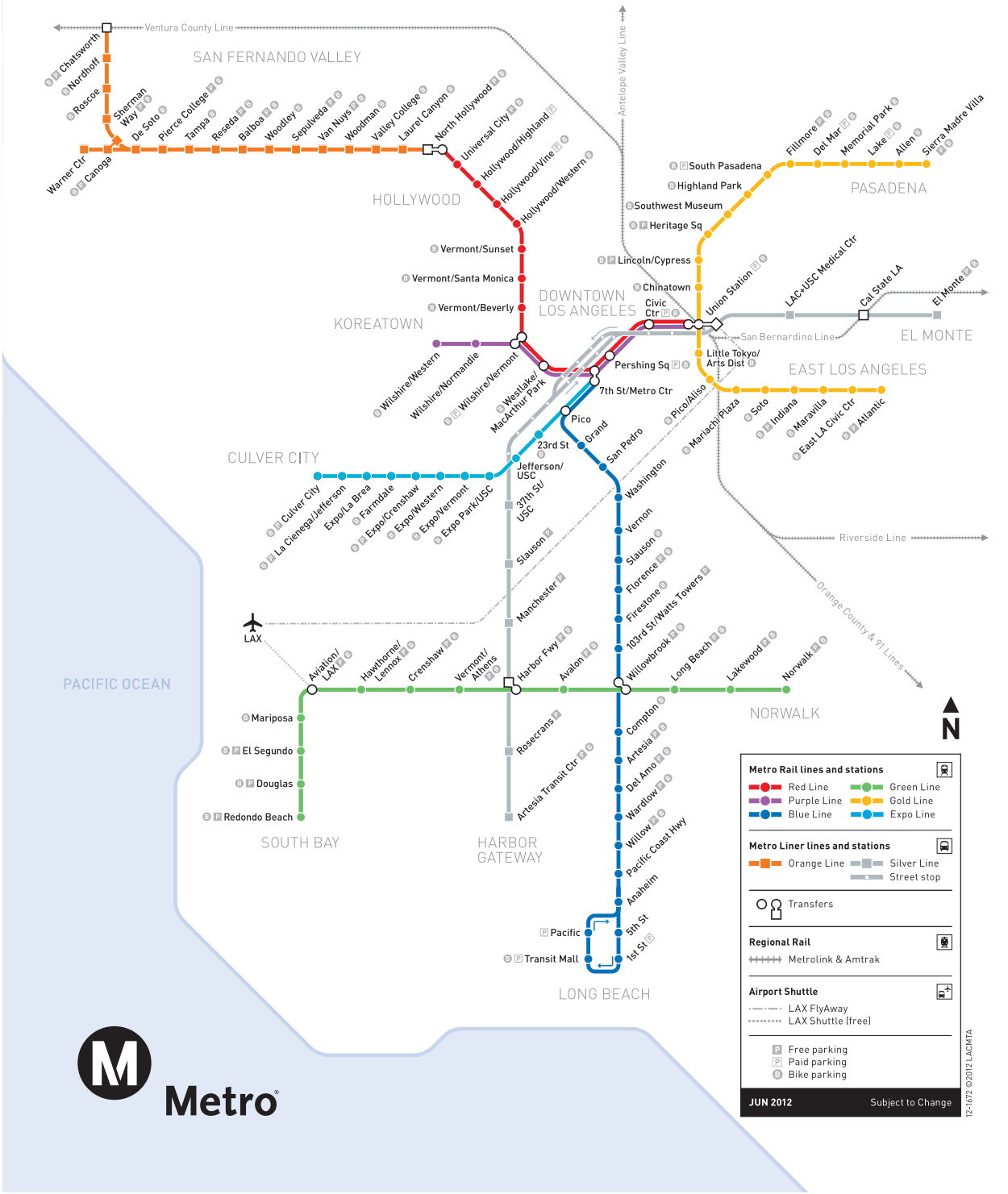
and to my parents, who taught me more than anyone,
have always supported me and my dreams,
and were the first to pay me to build
something that I designed.

Contents

Abbreviations

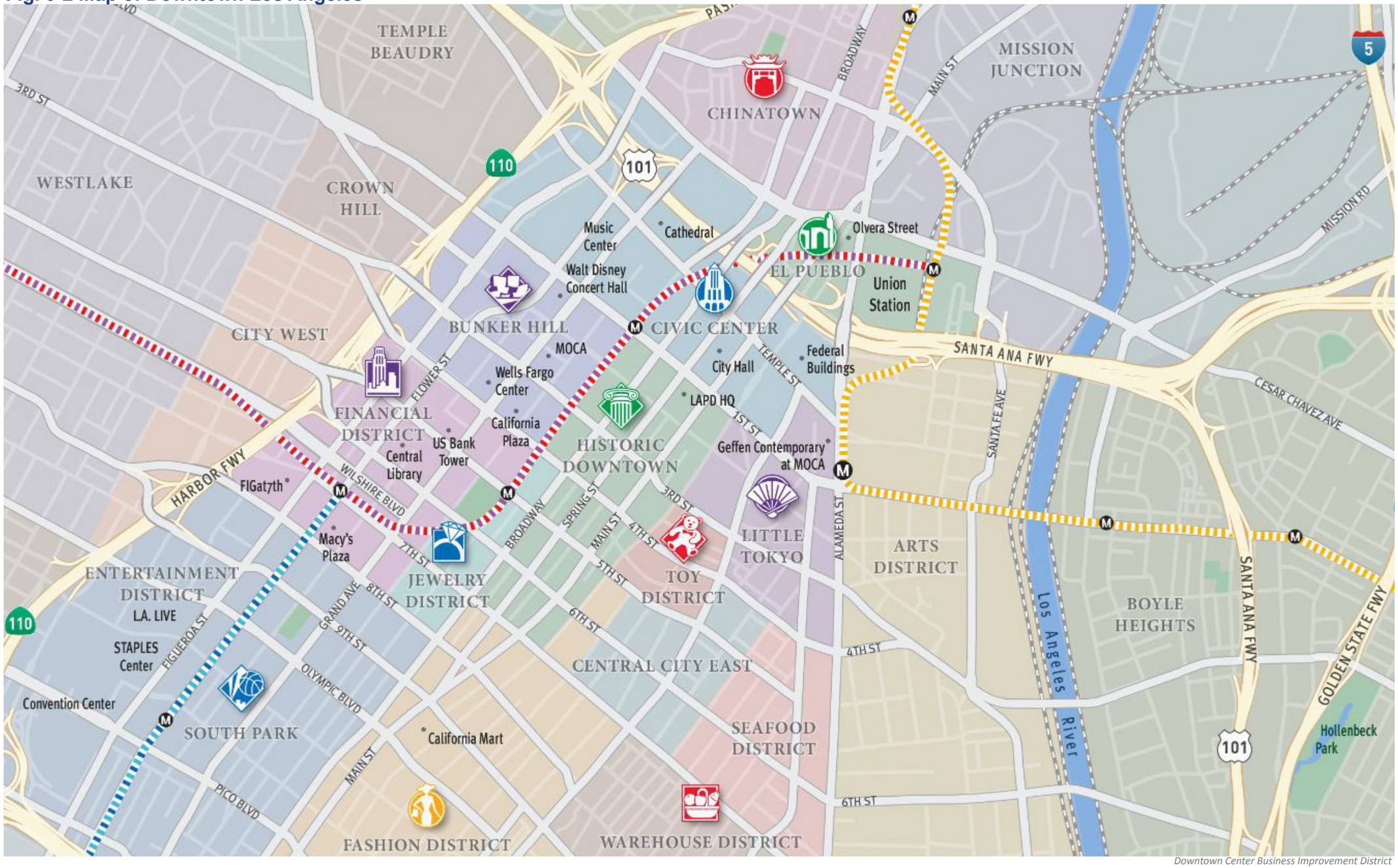
BPC	Bryant Park Corporation
Caltrans	State of California, Department of Transportation
City	City of Los Angeles
County	County of Los Angeles
DCBID	Downtown (Los Angeles) Center Business Improvement District
DWP	(City of) Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Metro	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
MOCA	Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
MWD	Metropolitan Water District
LA/CRA	Community Redevelopment Authority of the City of Los Angeles
LACMA	Los Angeles County Museum of Art
LAWA	Los Angeles World Airports, City of Los Angeles
LAX	Los Angeles International Airport
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
State	State of California
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
USC	University of Southern California

Fig. 0-1 Map of Los Angeles Metro System



Existing subway, light-rail and busway lines operated by Metro.
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro)

Fig. 0-2 Map of Downtown Los Angeles



Downtown Center Business Improvement District

Introduction

"The future cannot be predicted, but futures can be invented. It was man's ability to invent which has made human society what it is... The first step of the technological or social inventor is to visualize by an act of imagination a thing or state of things which does not yet exist and which to him appears in some way desirable. He can then start rationally arguing backwards from the invention and forward from the means at his disposal until a way is found from one to the other."

-Denis Gabor, 1963

Ideas about a city are powerful forces, and have lasting impacts on the built environment. Whether conceptions about what a given city is or about what it should be, visions play a major role in shaping urban development. Perhaps nowhere is this more true than in Los Angeles, an improbable metropolis which grew from a dusty pueblo with little water and no natural harbor, into the nation's second-largest city, busiest port and entertainment capital. The existing urban form of an area such as Downtown Los Angeles is the accumulation of partially-realized, past ideas about the future of the city. However, the ideas and trends that shaped the development of Los Angeles, and many American cities, in the twentieth century are falling away, presenting the opportunity for new visions of downtown development and civic space to take shape. This work seeks to understand the origins and effects of past visions for Downtown Los Angeles, critique the potential of current visions, and propose new ideas for urban development and public space, using the concepts of civic space and convergence as lenses and Los Angeles Union Station as a focal point. The intention is not to predict the future of Downtown L.A., but to invent it.

This work is divided into three parts. The first seeks to understand the visions and trends that shaped Los Angeles in the twentieth century, and their influence on the city today. The second looks at current and emerging trends that are likely to shape the city in the twenty-first century, and examines two cities that demonstrate these trends: London and New York. From these studies are derived design principles for transit-oriented civic space networks in city centers. The third part, narrows in on Union Station as a site, taking those principles and applying them to create a conceptual design for the future development of the station area. Finally, the design principles are used to evaluate the recently completed visions for Union Station, solicited by Metro as part of the Union Station Master Planning process, reflecting on those designs as they relate to the site and to the conceptual plan presented here.

Planning Los Angeles

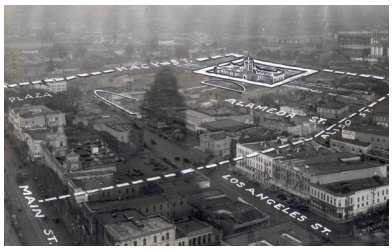
Past and Current Visions for Downtown Los Angeles

From the beginning, the civic boosters and leaders of Los Angeles understood the importance of visions in shaping the future growth of the city. In 1920, the first president of the newly-established City Planning Commission stated, "Right from the start we must understand that we are not the conservative branch of City Government… We are the ones who should 'Dream dreams and see Visions'—visions of the better city to be."[1] Dream they did, and over the next century Los Angeles envisioned and built over four-hundred miles of aqueduct, bringing water to the desert city; over five-hundred miles of freeway; and, a civic center housing the largest concentration of government employees outside of the national capital.[2] The consolidation of the passenger rail lines in a single union station in the central city was a similar work of vision.

When Union Station opened in 1939, Los Angeles was an entirely different city: urban development was concentrated in the L.A. basin, and streetcars were the dominate form of transportation. The monumental new station was envisioned as the beginning of "a new epoch in the history of transportation in Southern

1 Quoted in Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 248.
2 Los Angeles Department of Transportation, *Los Angeles Transportation Profile*, 2009.

California."[3] The opening of the station marked the culmination of more than forty years of planning efforts to bring the region's three major railroads together at single passenger terminus in Downtown Los Angeles. The station site, along Alameda Street between Cesar Chavez Avenue and Aliso Street, was chosen for its proximity to both the city's historic Plaza—the center of the city since its founding in 1781—and the then-new City Hall and Civic Center. However, the construction of Union Station marked the end of an era, and not a new stage of rail transportation. It was the Arroyo Seco Parkway, which opened the following year that foreshadowed the future. Over the next half-century, Los Angeles dedicated itself to freeway building and decentralized development. Union Station became known as "Last of the Great American Railway Stations" and faded into the past.



Union Station Site
View of the planned site of Union Station from City Hall in 1935 (above) and the existing station today (below). *Los Angeles Times (above); Walter Bibikow (below)*

Today, the station is a revived landmark and the hub of Southern California's growing commuter rail, subway and light-rail networks. Current plans call for six million square feet of development on the station site, with an additional five million square feet on surrounding parcels. As a future nexus for California high-speed rail, it has the potential to serve as the model for twenty-first century transportation centers, be a catalyst for the regeneration of Downtown, and create civic space in what is perceived as a center-less metropolis

The development of Union Station is more than a massive transportation project or a large-scale transit-oriented development—it is the latest effort in citymaking, the process of creating a new urban identity for Downtown Los Angeles. Earlier and on-going efforts in citymaking in Downtown Los Angeles include the creation of Olvera Street as a festival marketplace in the 1930s, the development of a monumental civic center in the mid-twentieth century, the redevelopment of Bunker Hill as a business and financial center in the 1960s, and the emergence of the LA Live entertainment complex in the new millennium. These efforts represent nearly a century of yearning by boosters, city officials, Downtown landowners and some members of general public for Downtown Los Angeles to become something more than just another business district.

3 Quoted in Bill Bradley, *The Last of the Great Stations: 40 Years of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal*, (Glendale, CA: Interurbans, 1979).

THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN STATION

Public space has been a central concern for all citymaking projects in downtown Los Angeles. Most have sought to create it, and many have tried to control it. The lack of public space has been a perennial criticism of Los Angeles. In many cases, privately-controlled semi-public spaces such as shopping malls and theme parks have become a substitute for city sidewalks and parks.

These two visions, for Downtown to somehow become the thriving metropolitan center that a great city deserves and for civic life to return to the public realm, are at the heart of the past one hundred years of Downtown planning and development and yet remain elusive as ever. How will citymaking and civic space in Downtown Los Angeles, central elements in the story of downtown development in the twentieth century, evolve in the twenty-first? There is no evidence that they will shrink from the public's consciousness. As ideas, they have had remarkable staying power and remain the focus of even the most recent development projects downtown. The largest new development project proposed for Bunker Hill, the Grand Avenue Project, which features the development of a twelve-acre Civic Park (now under construction) and new residential and office towers, bills its self as creating a "center" for Los Angeles. In identifying the "need for this project," Grand Avenue promoters write, "While the downtown has never fully captured the imagination of the public as the focus of civic life, the reality is construction and investment tell a different story…with over 10 million people per year anticipated to live in, work in or visit Bunker Hill, the opportunity to transform this area into a destination that attracts people from the entire region is before us," using the same language that supporters of Bunker Hill redevelopment employed a half-century before. As the plans for the future development of Union Station emerge, it is likely that station development will be called upon to give Los Angeles the center and civic space that it's long desired—the 'city' that its 72 suburbs are said to be search of.

Current and Emerging Trends

Densification, Demographics and the Rise of Transit

In addition to the city's long-held desires for downtown revitalization and civic space, there are three emerging trends that will influence the development around Union Station. The first is densification: over the next fifty years Los Angeles will grow up, not out. Since the first Europeans arrived in southern California, Los Angeles has been growing, and this is not expected to change. However, unlike the last one hundred years, during which new modes of transportation made it possible for the city to sprawl across the landscape in a way no city had before, most future growth will occur in already urbanized areas. Today, almost all usable land within the Los Angeles Basin has been urbanized, and with the population projected to continue to grow, the region will necessarily become more dense.

The second trend is demographic change: the state's population will continue to rise; however, most of this growth will be due to the high birth rate of Hispanics in California rather than in-migration. Thus, over the next half-century California will become increasingly non-white. In many ways, the state as a whole is following Los Angeles, where Hispanics already comprise a majority, and leading national trends. In 2001, California became the first large state without a white majority.[4] Since then Texas has become the nation's second largest majority-minority state, in 2005; while the nation as a whole is projected to become predominately non-white by mid-century.[5] By that time California's population will have grown from 37 million to nearly 60 million, with a projected Hispanic population of 31 million—outnumbering white residents by a ratio of two-to-one.[6] The changing composition of Los Angeles and the state as a whole, is reflected in part in changing public attitudes towards public space: as one social historian writes, "Los Angeles' emergence

4 California became the first large majority-minority state in early 2001, as immigrants from Latin America and Asia reduced the state's proportion of whites to 49 percent. Both the previous majority-minority states have fewer residents than the City of Los Angeles: Hawaii, which ranks 40th in population, has never had a white majority, and New Mexico, which ranks 36th in population, and was the first mainland state to have a majority-minority population. Zoltan Hajnal, "Common Ground: Enter the Majority-Minority State."

5 Associated Press, "Minority Population Surging in Texas"; "US Will Have Minority Whites Sooner, Says Demographer."

6 The most recent California Department of Finance population projections do not reflect the results of the 2010 Census. Revised projections reflecting the 2010 data are expected by 2013. State of California, Department of Finance, "Population Projections by Race / Ethnicity, Gender and Age for California and Its Counties 2000–2050."

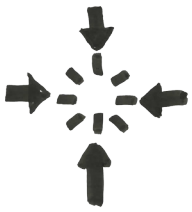
as the nation's preeminent Latino metropolis brings the street-oriented culture of Chicanos and Mexicans immigrants to the very center of a new civic life."[7]

The third trend is the decrease in ease of auto travel and the increase in ease of travel by other modes: in the coming decades it will become easier to walk, bike and take transit, but harder to drive in Los Angeles. For much of the past century, the development of an extensive road and freeway network facilitated auto travel in Los Angeles. Since the 1990s, disinvestment in the freeway system, and public spending on transit, have initiated a paradigm shift. Subways, light-rail, bus rapid transit and commuter rail now offer reliable alternatives for many trips, and the ease of travel by transit will increase as the system expands. This trend is driven in-part by a quiet revolution that is currently taking place among the agencies, institutions and power brokers that have shaped the city. The business community, labor leaders, city officials and voters have all embraced an ambitious plan for subway and light-rail extension that is now underway. The transition from a freeway grid, in which Downtown was just one of many nodes, to a radial transit system focused on Union Station, places Downtown back at the center of the city. This trend will likely lead to less development in outlying areas that are only served by overcrowded roads, and more development Downtown, which will have improved regional access.

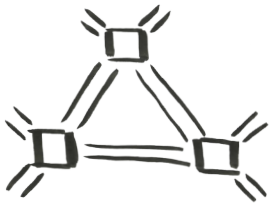
Together these three trends suggest that the development of Los Angeles in the first half of the twenty-first century will be dramatically different than that of the second half of the twentieth. However, they do not suggest a return to the patterns of the early twentieth century, when Los Angeles was a classic monocentric city, with all major financial institutions, retailers and entertainment venues clustered in the center of the city. Instead a new model is emerging: the convergent city, where downtown is not the center of everyday life, but is the center of civic life. The city center won't be the place where most Angelenos go to work everyday, but it will be the place where they converge for culture, amusement and travel. Downtown Los Angeles will be the place that people go to participate in major events and celebrations, to cheer on the city's professional sports teams, and

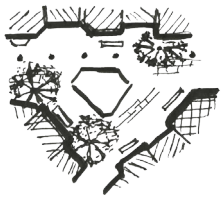
7 Avila, Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight, 241.

to connect to other parts of the region, the state and eventually, the world. The city center is also where the region's major industries converge: Downtown Los Angeles in the twenty-first century will be anchored by the tourism, entertainment and technology sectors. The city center will be the public face of the city, the defining image of Los Angeles. In the convergent city model, downtown is the gateway and destination for tourists, and residents: the place where the city comes together.



If the trends of densification, population diversification, and transit growth continue, Los Angeles may grow less like Phoneix or Houston and more like New York or London. Therefore, these cities offer lessons for Los Angeles, and their city centers present a glimpse of how future development in Downtown Los Angeles might take shape. Midtown Manhattan and the 42nd Street corridor, anchored by Grand Central Terminal, the Times Square subway station complex, and the Port Authority Bus Terminal, offers one example; the Heart of London / Charing Cross area, book-ended by Charring Cross Station and Picadilly Circus Underground Station, presents another. These case studies reveal three main lessons: first, that convergent city centers develop around networks of smaller-scale civic spaces, rather than a single monumental public space; two, convergent city spaces are characterized by highly diverse land uses, reflecting the major industries of the city, and by uses found only in those spaces serving a regional population; and, third, active management and a wide range of public amenities can be successful in turning around struggling city centers. In total, there are five elements which characterize suggests civic-space networks in convergent cities; they are: connectivity, vibrancy, authenticity, imageability, and flexibility.

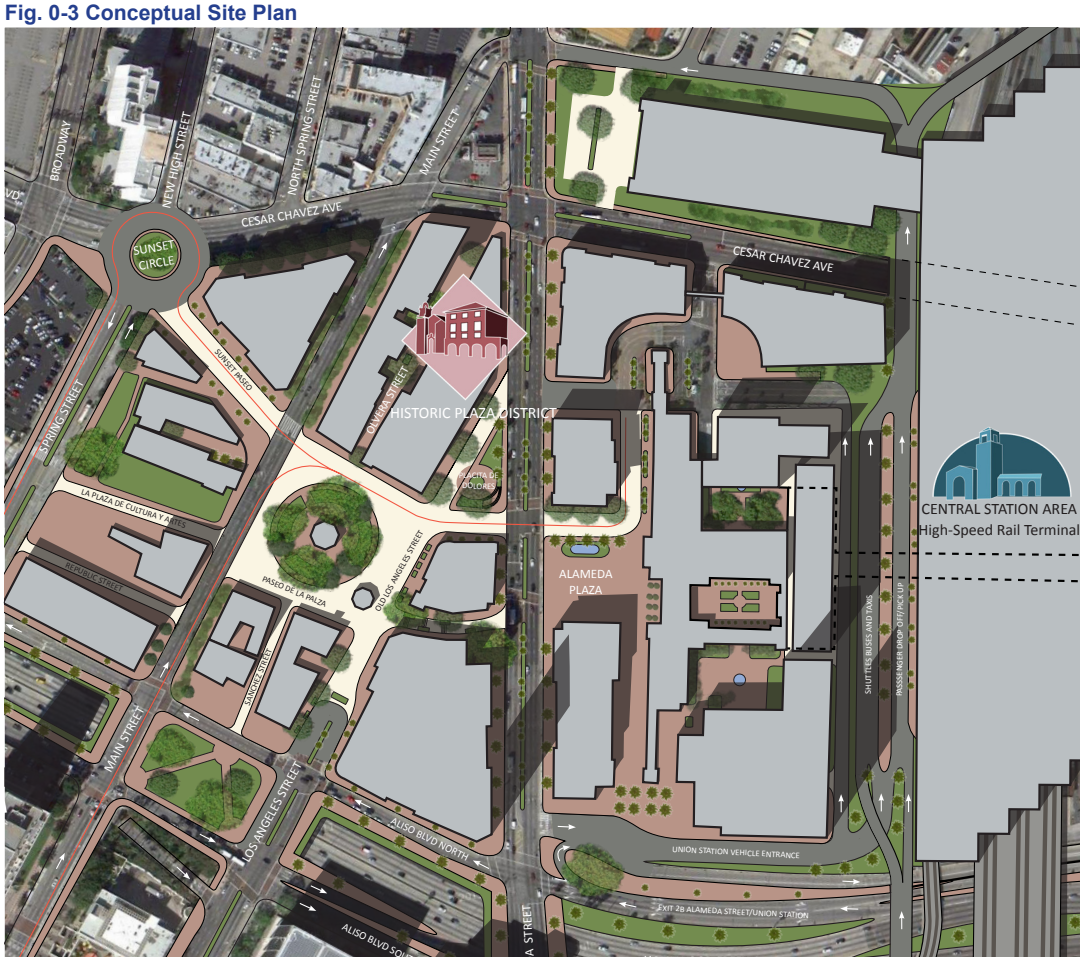




Towards a New Vision for Downtown Los Angeles
Creating a Conceptual Design for Union Station

Synthesizing the current and emerging trends, as well as the lessons of New York and London, points the way towards a new vision for Downtown Los Angeles and Union Station in the twenty-first century, wherein the site becomes as the nexus of Southern California. The conceptual design for Union Station presented in this thesis is an exploration of one possible future for the city. As a scenario, it is partly a projection of the current trends and partly an act of imagination, breaking from the present course to envision a better city that does not yet exist, but could. In this conceptual design, Downtown becomes a place of convergence that brings together tourists and residents, the city's history and its future development, and engages all of the city's diverse communities. As focus of a reinvented city center, Union Station will serve three important functions: first, the station will be both a gateway and a destination; second, the it will provide

Fig. 0-3 Conceptual Site Plan



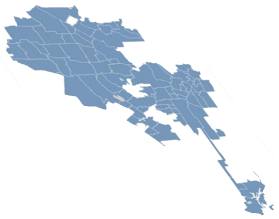
a link between the city's past and future; and, third, the station will be a cultural crossroads. With high-speed rail connections to international airports at the periphery of the metro region, the station will be the global entry point to Southern California. With the restoration the historic street and building pattern of the area, the district will once again be a connection between the historic Plaza and the Los Angeles River. Drawing on the existing strengths of the tourism-oriented El Pueblo Historical District around the Plaza area, the present use of the station and Plaza as locations for cultural events and film productions, and the emerging Clean-Tech Corridor along the Los Angeles River, Los Angeles Union Station will become a place of convergence between the city's major industries: tourism, entertainment and industrial production, all of which will be enhanced by closer integration in the center of the city.

1

Geographic + Planning Context

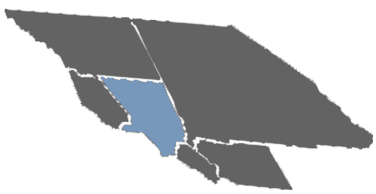
Looking at the natural and political geography of the region, this chapter explores where, and what, is Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is an idea as well as a place. It defies attempts at precise geographic definition. Of course, there is the City of Los Angeles, the nation's second largest in population. Comprised of over 3.7 million people spread out over nearly 500 square miles, the City of Los Angeles is officially divided into 35 Community Plan areas, and countless self-identified neighborhoods. Hollywood, Westwood, Century City, San Pedro and the sprawling San Fernando Valley, are all contained within the official boundaries of the municipality. But Beverly Hills, Culver City, Santa Monica, and West Hollywood are not; though they lie within Los Angeles—in the sense that they are surrounded by City of Los Angeles—and though they are culturally linked with "L.A.," these enclaves are all separate municipalities each with their own local governments. They are but a few of the 88 incorporated cities within Los Angeles County, which is largest local government unit in the United States by population. With over 9.8 million residents, Los Angeles County is roughly the size of the City of New York—plus another Manhattan. Were it separated from California, and given statehood in its own right, Los Angeles County would be the nation's ninth most populous state; California would remain first. In terms of area, with 4,752 square miles, it exceeds the combined size of Rhode Island and Delaware. But Los Angeles County is just part of the sprawling metropolis to which the moniker "L.A." is applied. Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura Counties comprise the balance of the super-city, which is stitched together not only

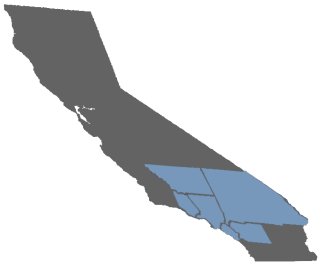


The 35 Community Plan Areas

The City of Los Angeles



Los Angeles County



Southern California

by the country's most infamous freeway system but also by the nation's third most-extensive commuter rail network.[1] Along with rural Imperial County, they are the jurisdiction of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the region's metropolitan planning organization, which is the nation's largest. In the end, atlases, maps and official boundaries fail to provide a satisfying answer to the question what, and where, is L.A. The grand conurbation of Los Angeles, at times seemingly comprised of little more than offramps, parking lots, palm trees and sunshine, exists in part only in the popular imagination. This chapter, and the following, begin to untangle the real and imagined Los Angeles.

Natural Features and Topography

Santa Monica Mountains and the Los Angeles River

Point Mugo
View of Mugo Rock, where the Santa Monica mountains meet the Pacific Ocean.
Kinexxiaons, 2010

There are many ways to slice the city of Los Angeles. The Santa Monica Mountains provide one useful division. The transverse range runs east-west across the mid-point of Los Angeles County. Rising out of the Pacific Ocean at Point Mugo, in Ventura County, they run east nearly forty miles to Griffith Park, in the center of Los Angeles. For the first twenty miles, from Point Mugo east, the ocean comes right up to the base of the range. Then the coastline juts south, and the base of the mountains gives way to broad plains on both sides, as shown in Figure 1-1. Here, the mountains serve to separate the San Fernando Valley to the north, from the Los Angeles Basin to the south, both of which were formed by the city's second defining topographic feature: the Los Angeles River.

The Origin of the Los Angeles River
View of the confluence of Arroyo Calabasas and Bell Creek, which combine to form the Los Angeles River in the Canoga Park neighborhood of the San Fernando Valley.
John Humble, 2001; J. Paul Getty Museum

While the Los Angeles River is a much less visible feature of the landscape of the city—largely hidden from view behind industrial buildings or backyard fences—the river played a critical role in shaping the natural and human geography of the city. In the north, the river carved what is now the San Fernando Valley, and the material which was eroded by the river was carried downstream and deposited to form the broad expanse of relatively flat land now called the Los Angeles Basin. For most of its history, the river did not follow a fixed course, but rather meandered across

1 Metrolink, which serves Southern California, has over 500 route miles. Only New Jersey Transit and the Long Island Railroad are more extensive systems.

Fig. 1-1 Topography of Los Angeles

View of the Los Angeles Basin, looking north towards the Santa Monica Mountains and San Fernando Valley beyond.
Google Earth

the expansive plain, alternatively emptying into Pacific Ocean at its present location near Long Beach, and at Santa Monica Bay, approximately fifteen miles away. Originally the river provided the city with most of its drinking water, and it was for this reason that the original settlement, which is now known as Downtown Los Angeles, was located along its banks. After a series of floods in the early twentieth century, the Army Corps of Engineers undertook a massive project to deepen the channel and line it with concrete, fixing the river along its present course.

Urban Development

The Los Angeles Basin and Wilshire Corridor

While the area and population of the city of Los Angeles are roughly equally divided by the Santa Monica Mountains, most of the city's landmarks, institutions and employment centers are concentrated south of the range. The city's beaches and airport are located in the basin, as are UCLA and USC, and the urban centers of Century City, Hollywood, the Miracle Mile and Downtown Los Angeles. The separate cities of Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and West Hollywood are also located on the south side of the mountains. In contrast, the Valley, as its known locally, is more suburban and less dense: the Long Island to the basin's Manhattan.

It is useful to think of the basin as a rectangle, about as wide east to west as Manhattan is long. As illustrated in Figure 1-2, the Santa Monica Mountains form the northern edge, while the Pacific Ocean forms the western and southern sides. Along the western edge, from north to south, are the beach communities of Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, Venice, Marina del Rey, Playa del Ray, El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach and Redondo Beach. Along the southern side, from west to east, are San Pedro, the Port, and Long Beach. In the south-west corner, the land rises up, forming the hilly Palos Verdes Peninsula. In the opposite corner, is another high point. There lies Griffith Park, within which are contained Cahuegna Peak, Mount Hollywood and Mount Lee, on whose slopes can be found the Griffith Observatory and the Hollywood Sign. Hollywood itself lies in the flatlands below.

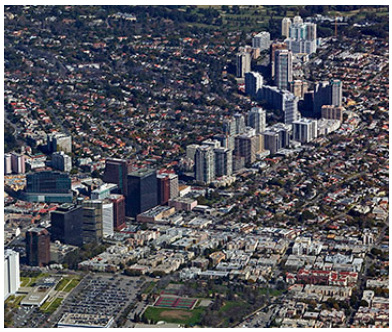
Fig. 1-2 Urban Development of the Los Angeles Basin

View of the Los Angeles Basin and the communties within it.
Google Earth

Along the north edge of the basin, along a fifteen mile corridor from the river to Santa Monica Bay, is the area of densest development. Organized along Wilshire Boulevard, a series of urban centers forms what architecture critic Reyner Banham called a 'linear downtown.' Downtown Los Angeles is located in the north-east of the Basin, which places it at the east edge of the city of Los Angeles, though it is located in roughly the geographic center of the urbanized area of Southern California. Downtown remains the largest employment center in the region and the administrative center of the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. About three-miles west, Wilshire Center, also known as Koreatown for its large Korean-American population, is another dense, mixed-use district. Further west is the Miracle Mile. Named for its unlikely development, the Miracle Mile, which is home to the La Brea Tar Pits, was once a major shopping district. Today its better known for its cultural institutions, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the George Page Museum. Roughly half-way to the ocean is the enclave of Beverly Hills, with its high-end shopping district located centered around Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive. On the other side of Beverly Hills, is the high-rise office district of Century City, which was developed in the 1960s on the former

Fig. 1-3 Wilshire Corridor
View of the Los Angeles Basin, looking south-west from Mt. Lee above the Hollywood Sign.
Photo: Polo Jack, 2006

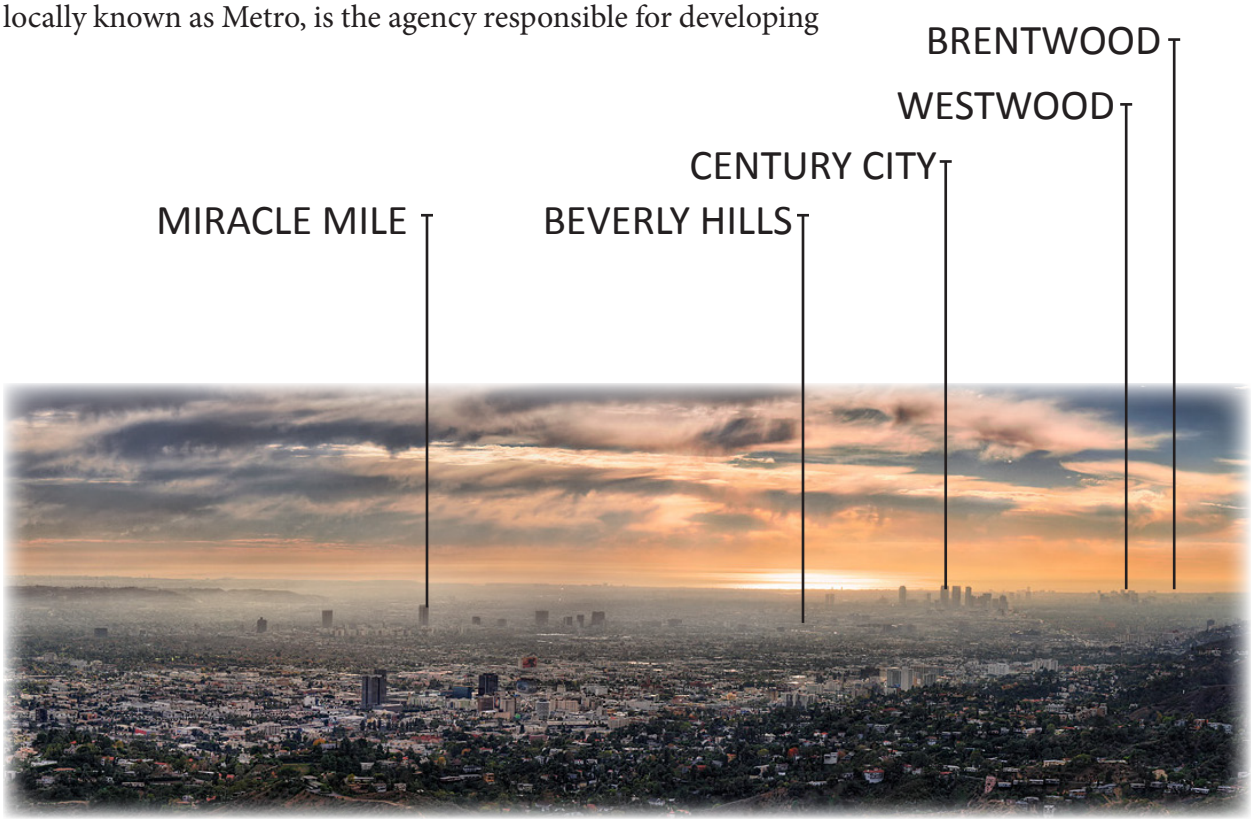
backlot of the Twentieth Century Fox studios. Finally, near base of the Sepulveda Pass, which links the San Fernando Valley and the Basin, lies Westwood. Originally envisioned as a low-rise village at the foot of UCLA, since the construction of the I-405 San Diego Freeway, it has developed into another high-rise business district along with Brentwood on the west side of the freeway.



Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood
High-rises line Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood and what is known as 'Condo Canyon' in the background, while single-family homes dominate the surrounding area. *Herb Ling*

Aside from Downtown, the corridor is characterized by a unique urban form: high-rise office and residential towers along Wilshire Boulevard back to immediately adjacent single-family homes. Since the mid-twentieth century, there have been efforts to build rail transit along the corridor, which were rejected by voters in the 1960s and '70s, and stymied by a Federal ban on tunneling along the corridor due to concerns about underground methane gas. Today, the idea has been revived and Los Angeles County voters have approved a sales tax which will fund construction of a subway from the current terminus in Wilshire Center to Westwood, finally linking the Westside to Downtown with rail.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, locally known as Metro, is the agency responsible for developing



and operating bus and rail transit in Los Angeles County. The first new fixed-route transit line, the Blue Line, opened in 1990, connecting Downtown Los Angeles with Long Beach, 22 miles south. In 1993, the Metro opened the region's first modern subway, the Red Line linking Union Station with Westlake along Wilshire Boulevard. Over the next decade, the Red Line was extended to Wilshire Center, Hollywood and North Hollywood in the San Fernando Valley. In 2008, voters approved a half-cent sales tax to fund a dozen new transit projects. Today, the Metro rail system encompasses nearly ninety-miles of service along six lines connecting Union Station in Downtown with Pasadena, East Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, El Segundo, Culver City and the San Fernando Valley, with extensions to Santa Monica, Westwood, Claremont, and Inglewood underway, as shown in Figure 1-4.

Downtown Los Angeles, like the larger city, is divided into many neighborhoods and districts, as illustrated in Figure 1-5. While its edges are often defined by the freeways that surround it, in truth Downtown Los Angeles occupies only the northwest quadrant of the rectangle formed by the Harbor, Hollywood, Santa Ana and Santa Monica Freeways, but includes the areas of Chinatown and El Pueblo, which severed from the rest of the district by the Hollywood Freeway (US 101).

Union Station is located across the freeway from the Civic Center and more developed areas of Downtown, on the edge of the industrial corridor along the Los Angeles River. The approximately forty-acre station site is bordered by Alameda Street to the west, Cesar Chavez Avenue to the north, Vignes Street to the east and the Hollywood Freeway to the south, as shown in Figure 1-6. The tracks and platforms (1) divide the site in two from north to south. The historic station building (2) is located on to the west, fronting Alameda Street, opposite the historic Plaza (3). Adjacent to the station building are an existing apartment complex (4) and the headquarters of the Metropolitan Water District (5). East of the tracks, towards the river, is the Gateway Plaza complex, which includes a bus plaza and headquarters of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which purchased the station property in 2011.

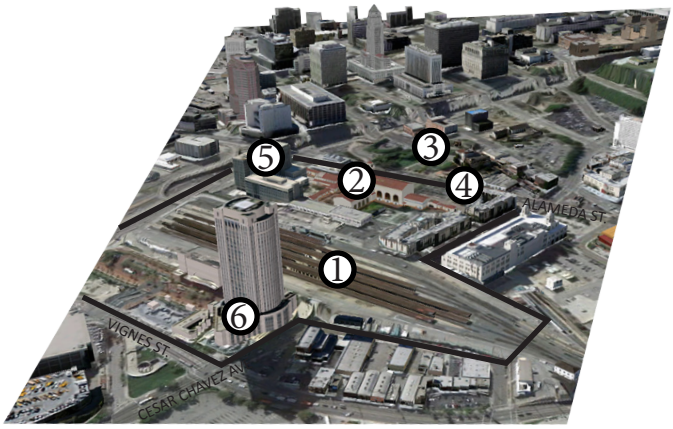


Fig. 1-6 Los Angeles Union Station Site

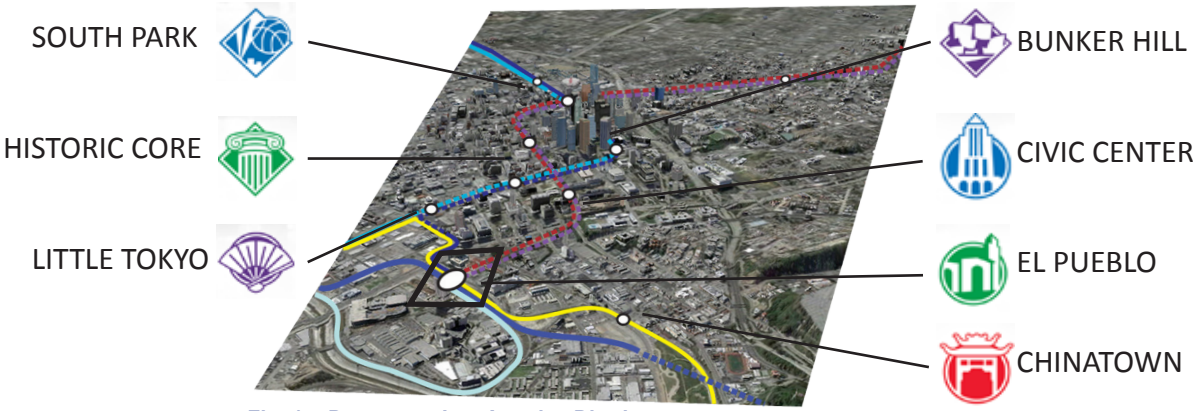


Fig. 1-5 Downtown Los Angeles Districts
With existing and planned transit shown

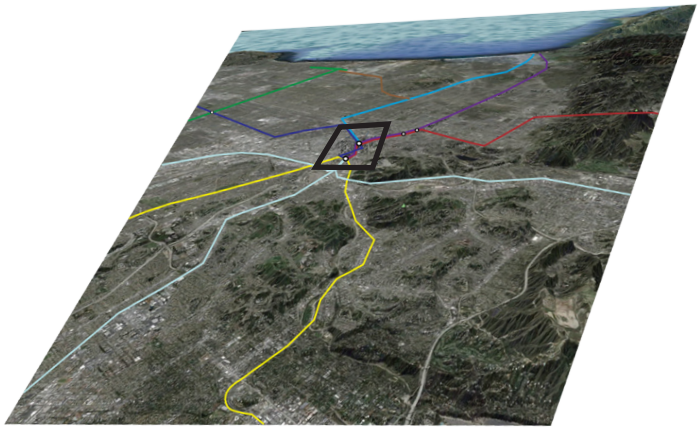


Fig. 1-4 Regional Rail Network
With existing and planned transit shown

2

Historic Context
Past Visions of Los Angeles

This chapter explores the visions of city boosters, civic leaders and urban planners, which gave rise to the city as we know it today.

Within Los Angeles there has always been a tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces, what historian Robert Fogelson described as an "ambivalent attitude towards urbanization."[1] Accordingly, for almost as long as there has been a Downtown Los Angeles, there has been anxiety about it, and there have been repeated efforts to improve it. These revitalization efforts correspond with specific visions of what a good city should be, and reflect the two sides of the tension between downtown-centered growth and decentralized urban development. There has been a constant battle between the forces and proponents of decentralization, and the Downtown establishment which has sought to maintain their position as the center of the region. Studying the Downtown planning efforts of the twentieth century, four distinct visions for Los Angeles can be seen: first, the romantic, tourist-oriented vision of the historic center city as a "lost paradise," which idealized the region's Spanish/Mexican past; second, the vision of Downtown as the governmental and administrative center of the city, which grew out of Progressive-Era ideals and the design aesthetic of the City Beautiful movement, but was eventually rendered in modernism; third, the vision of Downtown as a business and financial center—a modern, auto-oriented, high-rise district; and finally, the vision of Downtown as a sports and entertainment

1 Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 2.

center. These visions, which produced the festival marketplace of Olvera Street, the monumental Civic Center, the corporate citadel of Bunker Hill and the growing visual cacophony and entertainment complex known as L.A. Live, have all been imposed on Los Angeles Union Station as well, and continue to influence the development of Downtown Los Angeles.

Civic Centers
The Van Nuys Civic Center (below) serves as a branch office City of Los Angeles adminstration. It's resign reflects that of Los Angeles City Hall (above), which is located Downtown. *LA Curbed*

Downtown Los Angeles, as it exists today, is not the organic product of real estate values and the free market; rather, it is the end product of city planning and taxpayer-financed interventions. Olvera Street—a popular tourist destination near Union Station, which is lined with historic buildings and small stalls selling souvenirs—is not an authentic Mexican marketplace, but rather a carefully-themed shopping environment built with prison-labor.[2] The Civic Center—the clustering of city, county, state and federal administrative buildings in the central district—has been a concerted effect. It may seem obvious, since most local governments are concentrated in this way, but there was a strong effort to decentralize the administration of the city through satellite civic campuses; the Van Nuys Civic Center, with its scaled-down version of City Hall is but one example. By and large, downtown supporters have succeeded in clustering the civic institutions in the central area. Efforts to maintain Downtown's role as an office, entertainment and retail center have met with varying degrees of success. Through a massive, publicly-financed redevelopment scheme, Downtown maintains the tallest skyline and greatest concentration of corporate offices, though its dominance is challenged by competing skylines along the Wilshire Boulevard corridor.

Common to all the visions for Downtown has been the goal of protecting and enhancing Downtown property values, and small group of local elites and civic boosters serve as the recurring characters in the Downtown story. Chief among these players has been the newspaper industry, led by Henry Chandler, the

2 William Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 188.

owner of the Los Angeles Times. Joan Didion writes, "[A] great deal of Los Angeles as it appears today derived from this impulse to improve Chandler property… Union Station and the Los Angeles Civic Center and the curiosity known as Olvera Street are where they are because Harry Chandler wanted to develop the north end of downtown, where the Times building and many other of his downtown holdings lay."[3] Organizations such as the Downtown Businessmen's Association, the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, and the Central City Committee all fought to preserve the centrality of Downtown.[4] Other central figures who shaped the vision of Downtown Los Angeles included Helen Hunt Jackson, a writer who almost single-handedly popularized the image of Southern California's mission past, and Catherine Sterling, who made Jackson's fantasy real with the creation of Olvera Street.[5]

From the beginning of the twentieth century, many Los Angeles citizens have argued for dispersed, rather than centralized development. Angeleno visionaries challenged the historical trajectory of city development, asking "Is it inevitable or basically sound or desirable that larger and larger crowds be brought into the city's center; must all large business, professional and financial operations be conducted in a restricted area[?]"[6] Like the American founding fathers, who envisioned a new nation of aligned but self-governing units spaced out across a bountiful land, in contrast to the centralized control and urban deprivation of old Europe, Los Angeles's early planners imaged the region as "Not another New York, but a new Los Angeles. Not a great homogeneous mass with a pyramiding of population and squalor in a single center, but a federation of communities coordinated into a metropolis of sunlight and air."[7] For the most part, this

3 Joan Didion quoted in Cara Mia DiMassa, "In L.A.'s Nucleus, Changing Times."

4 Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 155.

5 Carey McWilliams writes, "Someday the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce should erect a great bronze statue of Helen Hunt Jackson at the entrance to Cajon Pass. Beneath the statue should be inscribed no flowery dedication, but the simple inscription: 'H.H.—In Gratitude,'" for her novel *Ramona* was the most successful promotional material ever written about Los Angeles. McWilliams, *Southern California*, 71.

6 Clarence A. Dykstra, "Congestion de Luxe--Do We Want It?" quoted in Fogelson,, 163. Originally published in *Pacific Outlook*, June 1927.

7 Los Angeles Planning Department Scrapbook quoted in ibid.

Mission Style Suburbia
The architecture of Spanish California, such as Mission Santa Ines (above) heavily influenced the design of surban Los Angeles , such as this home at 8152 Sunset Boulevard. *Rusty Lopez (top image); Los Angeles Public Library (bottom image)*

vision was realized. Southern California, as it was built in the twentieth century, was a modern reinterpretation of Thomas Jefferson's vision of an agrarian American nation spreading across the continent in an endlessly-replicable grid, with each family tending to a plot of grass and a citrus tree, instead of a farm.

The suburban vision of Southern California influenced in part by literature, such as Jackson's *Ramona*, which romanticized the region's Spanish colonial past. Suburban Los Angeles co-opted both the architecture and language of the mission and *ranchero* to produce the stucco and red-tiled, mission-style shopping center and the ranch home. In contrast, Downtown boosters took both their urban ideas and design sensibilities from established east-coast American cities. This clash of ideas is reflected first in the history of the city's oldest public space, the Plaza. The Plaza and its design reflect the cultural diversity and ethnic tensions of Los Angeles as it has evolved from a Spanish pueblo to an international city.

Downtown as a Historic Center

El Pueblo de Los Angeles

Downtown Los Angeles
The city's skyline against the snow-covered San Gabriel Mountains. *LA Times*

Looking at the landscape of the Los Angeles basin, many wonder why it has a downtown at all. From the hills above Hollywood, the cluster of skyscrapers on the north-east edge of the plains—fifteen miles east of the beaches, twenty miles due north of the port—is a strange aberration from low-rise landscape of the sprawling metropolis. In contrast to high-rises of Lower Manhattan, which jut up at the tip of the island like the prow of a ship cutting through the water, or the sculpted-skyline of San Francisco, which slopes gently upward from the bay-shore like the mountains surrounding it, the towers of Downtown Los Angeles always seem out of place—like the view of a palm tree against the backdrop of the snow-covered San Gabriel Mountains in late January. But the origin of Downtown Los Angeles is no

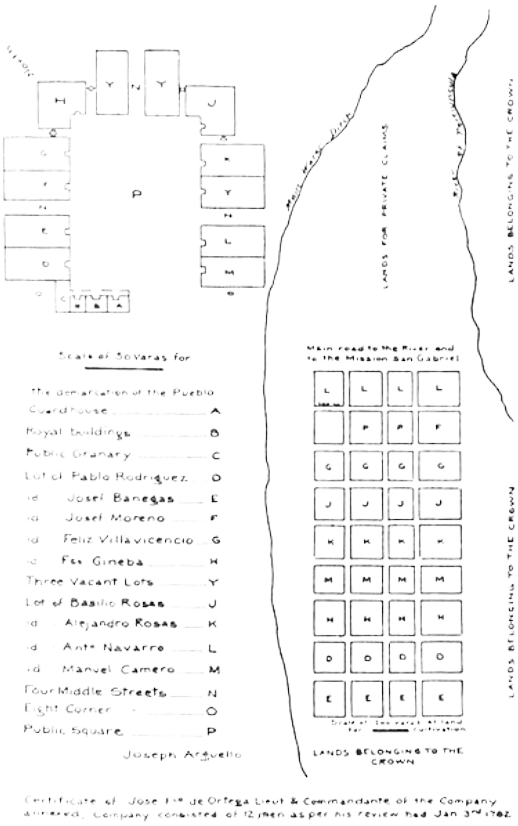


Fig. 2-1 Spanish Plan for Los Angeles
Representation of José Darío Argüello's 1786 plan for the Los Angeles pueblo (left). North is to the top-left, where the Plaza and residences are shown. Agricultural fields are represented in the bottom-right. The two streams running from top to bottom are the *Zanja Madre*, or 'mother' irrigation ditch, and the Los Angeles River. *California Historical Society Collection, USC Libraries.*

different than that of New York or most other colonial American cities: the location central business district today reflects the site of original colonial settlement.

Like the other mega-cities of California, Los Angeles was originally a Spanish settlement; but in contrast to San Diego, San Francisco and San Jose, all of which developed around Spanish missions and presidios, it was not established as an outpost of the Church or military. The nearest mission was nine miles away, in the San Gabriel Valley. According to tradition, it was from that site that the city's forty-four founders walked on September 4, 1781, to establish *El Pueblo de La Reina de Los Angeles*—an event which is reenacted each year by the descendants of the original *pobladores*.[8] As illustrated in Figure 2-1, the settlement was laid out in accordance with the Laws of the Indies: a vision for urban settlements in the new world adopted by the Spanish crown, which dictated the arrangement of streets in a grid, oriented at

8 Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 31.

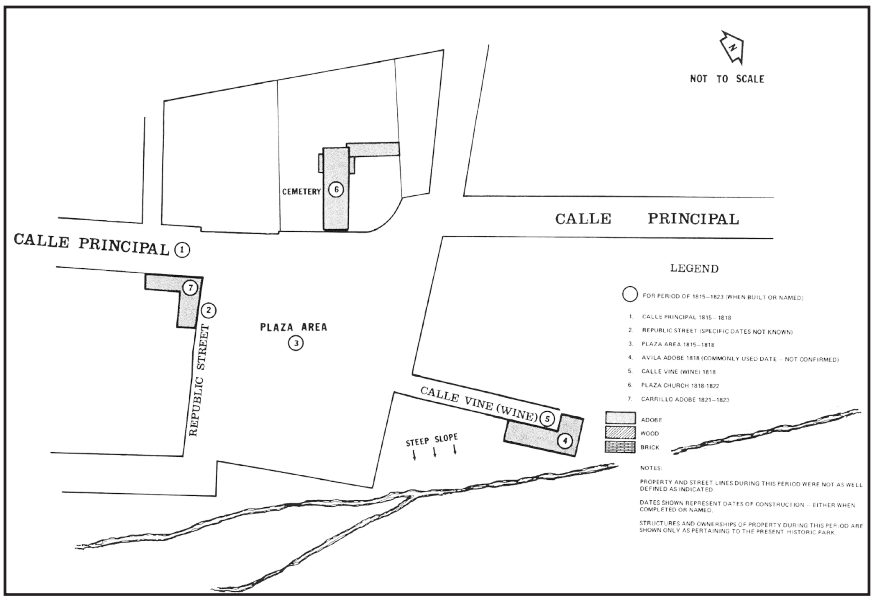
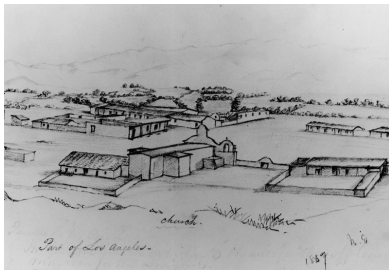


Fig. 2-2 The Plaza in 1823
El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, General Plan

a forty-five degree angel from the cardinal directions in order to protect the open space, or *plaza*, at the center.[9] However, the streets of Downtown Los Angeles are offset by only 36 degrees; whether this was a deliberate variation or a surveying error that occurred when the site of the plaza was moved to higher ground in 1822, is unknown, as is the location of the original plaza.[10] Aside from this deviation, the settlement grew up in the typical fashion of Spanish colonial cities, with the most important buildings clustered around a central open space—*la Plaza*—which was the geographic and social heart of the community, as shown in Figure 2-2.[11] In this way, the pueblo was a traditional, centripetal city.



The Plaza in 1849
View of the Los Angeles Plaza, looking east from the Fort Moore Hill. The Plaza Catholic Church is pictured as the central building with the open space of plaza and the Lugo adobe visible across the way. Drawn by William Hutton. *USC Digital Archive*

Following cession of California to the United States in 1848, and the subsequent discovery of gold in the northern part of the territory, Los Angeles began to grow from a relatively isolated Mexican settlement into a prospering American town. The influx of hundreds of thousands of miners brought economic benefits for Los Angeles, which was able to capitalize on the sudden

9 Ibid., 22.
10 D.J. Waldie, "L.A.'s Crooked Heart"; Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 44.
11 Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 26.

increased demand for livestock products.[12] As new businesses opened, the city's commercial district expanded beyond the confines of the original pueblo. Residents and business owners in the newly prosperous city, whose population increased nearly three-fold during the decade following admission into the union, suddenly found the dusty open space at the town's center unbefitting of its increased stature.[13]

The earliest revitalization efforts of the Plaza began in the 1860s, and were an attempt to impose Anglo-theories of urban design on the traditionally Mexican space, reflecting the city's shift from a Mexican to an American settlement. Leading the charge to redevelop the plaza were the city's newspapers, who became a dominant player in the shaping of the city center for the next fifty years. In 1869, the *Los Angeles Daily News* advocated a renovation of the plaza as a recreational space and public garden:

> What we want is a place for public promenade, where little children can throw themselves upon the grass and sport in the shade of umbrageous trees. This is what we ought to have. The Plaza is big enough. Remove the ungainly excrescence from the center of the Plaza, plant trees, makes grass and flower pots, walks, erect benches, and place a fountain in the midst, and in a short time we would have a place of recreation that would be conductive to health and reflect credit upon the taste of the City Fathers.[14]

The Victorian-era Plaza
View of the Los Angeles Plaza, circa 1885, after the addition of lawns, formal walkways, and wrought-iron fences.
USC Digital Archive

The *Daily News* vision for the Plaza reflected an Olmstedian understanding of the urban park as a place of respite from the surrounding city—a place for passive recreation, rather than the active social and commercial center that the plaza had been for the Mexican pueblo.[15] This vision for the Plaza corresponds with the centripetal pattern of urban growth, by maintaining the plaza as the center of the city; however, it also foreshadows the centrifugal forces to come, most importantly the idea that people needed an escape from urbanization. In 1871, the plaza was redesigned and given its present circular form, as depicted

12 Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 15.
13 Between 1850, when California was admitted to the Union, and 1860, the population of Los Angeles increased from 1,610 to 4,385. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Volume I. Population*, 18–19.
14 Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 91.
15 Ibid.

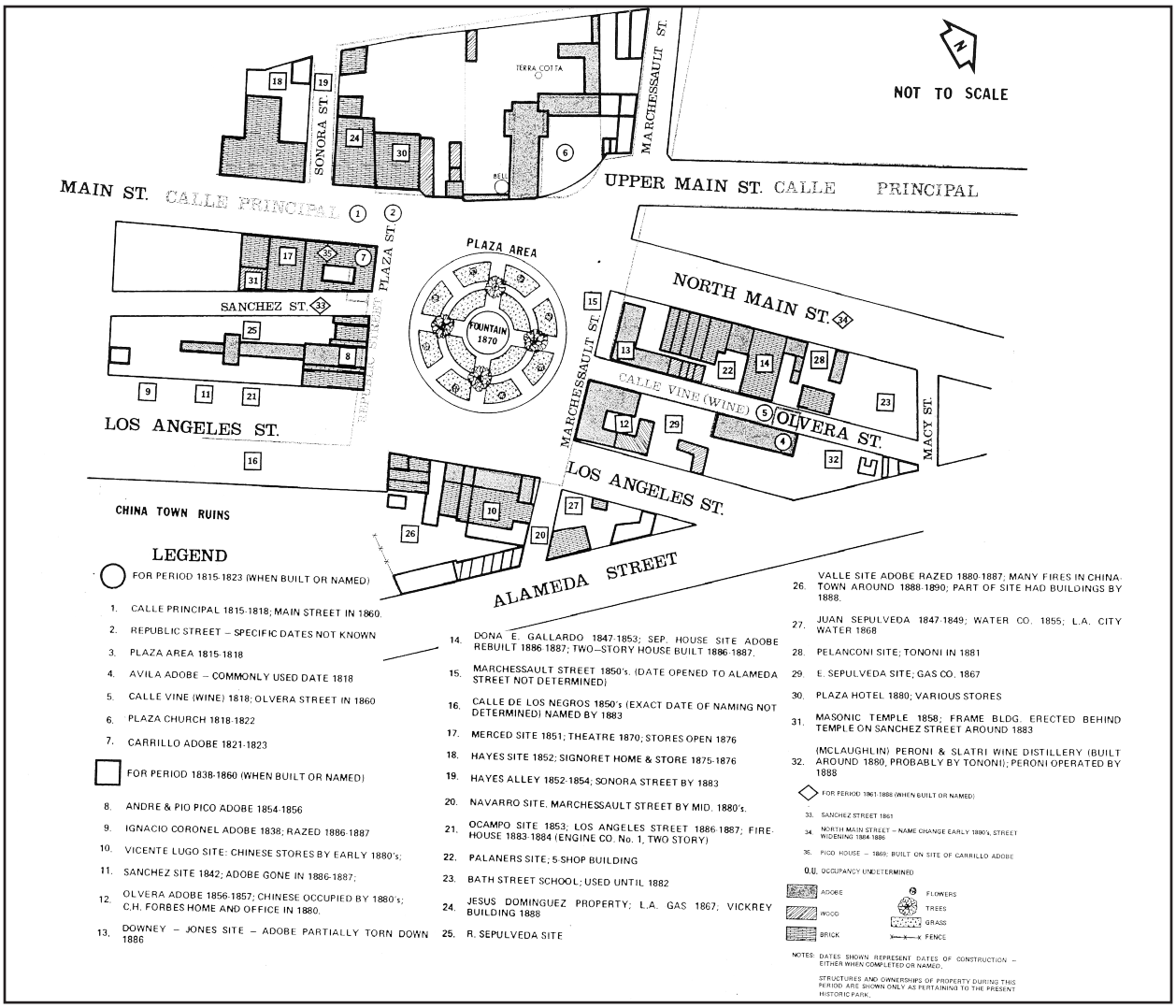


Fig. 2-3 The Plaza in 1888
El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, General Plan

in Figure 2-3.[16] Over the next decade a series of improvements added an ornamental fountain (replacing the functional brick water tank), paved walkways, and the Morton Bay fig trees that still stand today.[17] All these changes reflected the vision of Los Angeles as a proper, American city. While this effort sought to provide a verdant refuge in the center of the city, much like Fredrick Law Olmstead's Central Park in New York; while on a much smaller scale, it reveals a similar underlying desire to escape the city for the fresh air and greenery of the countryside—a desire that would later manifest itself in suburban developments.

16 Ibid., 92.
17 Ibid.

Despite these improvements, the plaza did not remain the center of the city, as it had been under Mexican rule. The central business district shifted south, to what is now known as the Historic Core or the Old Bank District, which was laid out with a regular grid and larger lots, making the area suitable for larger scale commercial development. As the Anglo business community established itself in the new downtown, the historic Plaza was free to remain a multi-ethnic space, left to the city's minorities. The Plaza church remained the cultural center of the city's Hispanic community, while the Chinese community was concentrated in the area east of the Plaza and along Sanchez Street.

While the Spanish colonial society in California was primarily urban, organized into small settlements with a shared common public space surrounded by the important institutions of the state and church, it was imagined by Americans as a bucolic existence—a life of leisure lived on sprawling rancheros. No work of fact or fiction better conveyed this image, nor had more influence in shaping how Americans perceived of California, than *Ramona*. Carey McWilliams devotes a chapter of his seminal text on the region to the novel, which he writes "firmly established the Mission legend in Southern California."[18] The first novel about Southern California when it was published in 1884, Helen Hunt Jackson's tragic of story of an Anglo-Native American girl raised on a Spanish ranchero and her Indian lover became one of the most-widely read books of its time. While Jackson wrote to bring attention to what she saw as the plight of the Indians, imagining herself as a Harriet Betcher Stow for the Native Americans, her work did for Southern California what Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* did for the antebellum South. It romanticized and obscured historic realities, while creating the defining image of California for generations of Americans, who flocked to visit sites fictionalized in the novel. Originally decried by California civic groups for its sympathetic depiction of the state's Mexican past and native inhabitants, McWilliams writes as "hordes of winter

Selling Southern California
Ramona's image was used to market Southern California agricultural products and the region itself. *Smithsonian*

18 McWilliams, *Southern California*, 73.

tourists began to express interest in visiting 'Ramona's land,' Southern California experienced an immediate change of attitude and overnight became positively Ramona-conscious. Beginning in 1887, a Ramona promotion, of fantastic proportions, began to be organized in the region."[19] Ramona's image was hence used to sell everything from California oranges to Los Angeles real estate, and nearly forty-years after its publication, *Ramona* and the image of the missions that it presented, became the basis for the redevelopment of the Plaza as the first themed tourist environment of the twentieth-century.

Today Olvera Street, a "Mexican" marketplace created alongside the original Plaza, is one of Los Angeles's best known attractions, and has become the basis for the El Pueblo historic district; however, the street and the plaza of today are in part a fantasy derived from *Ramona*. The effort to preserve the Plaza as a historic district was initiated by Catherine Sterling who, like Jackson, was not a native of Southern California yet became enamored with the region's colonial past. Just as Jackson found the missions in a general state of disrepair, and according to McWilliams' quoting the illustrator who accompanied her, "'In the sunny, delicious, winterless California air,' these crumbling ruins, with their walled gardens and broken bells, vast cemeteries and caved in wells, exerted a potent romantic influence on Mrs. Jackson's highly susceptible nature," Sterling found the Plaza in a state of neglect when she arrived in Los Angeles in 1928.[20] Despite beautification efforts in the 1860s and '70s, new businesses and residential districts drew people away from the Pueblo district, and by the turn of the century the Plaza had largely fallen into disrepair. Industrial uses, such as a power-generating plant for the Los Angeles Railway Company, were developed around the Plaza adjacent to city's oldest house, the Avilia adobe, which was in ruins and slated for demolition. After visiting the Plaza, Sterling lamented "Where was the romance of the past? ...I visited the old Plaza, birthplace of the city, and found it forsaken

19 Ibid., 72–73.
20 Ibid., 72; Poole and Ball, *El Pueblo*, 45

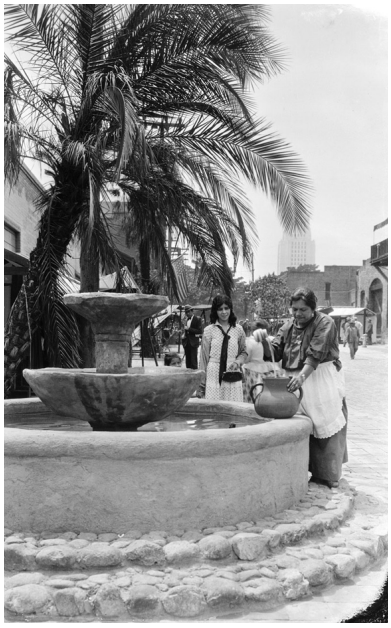
and forgotten."[21] Seeing the City prepared to literally wipe away its past, Sterling began a crusade to save the adobe and beautify the Plaza. The unpaved alley known as Olvera Street on which the abode was situated, became the centerpiece of her effort. Convinced, rightly, that it would be futile to preserve the adobe without addressing the decline of the Pueblo district as a whole, Sterling proposed that the alley be vacated by the city and recast as a "Spanish-American social and commercial center"—the first festival marketplace.[22]

When Olvera Street opened as a tourist attraction in 1930, it was a fantasy made real and it proved to be a commercially successful, if not entirely accurate, portrayal of the city's Hispanic heritage. Sterling wrote,

> Olvera Street holds for me all the charm and beauty which I dreamed for it because out of the hearts of the Mexican people is spun the gold of Romance and Contentment. No sweeter, finer people live, than the men and women of Mexico and whatever evil anyone believes about them has been bred in the darkness of ignorance and prejudice.

Her patronizing, but sympathetic feelings towards the Mexican community were not shared by Angelenos as a whole; in as much as her creation of Olvera Street was an attempt to raise acceptance of Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles, it failed. While Los Angeles embraced its Mexican past, it viewed its Mexican inhabitants as loafers at best, and criminals at worst; during the Depression, Los Angeles County undertook an effort to repatriate thousands of Mexican receiving public aid.[23]

Sterling's vision of Olvera Street, which celebrates the city's Mexican past at the exclusion of its other cultural groups, persists today. Recently, efforts to open a French restaurant, in the historic Pico Hotel on the plaza, were opposed by the city's



The Old and New Los Angeles
Olvera Street and Los Angeles City Hall, visible in the background, reflect visions of the city's romanticized past and idealized, modern future.
USC Archive, California Historical Society: LA Chamber of Commerce

21 Catherine Sterling quoted in Poole and Ball, El Pueblo, 47.

22 Sterling quoted in ibid., 50.

23 Beginning in 1931, the County of Los Angeles paid the Southern Pacific Railroad to return Mexican nationals to their homeland, at a rate of $14.70 per person. In 1932 alone, more than 11,000 Mexicans were deported from Los Angeles by the County. McWilliams describes the event as a "tragicomic affair: tragic in the hardships occasioned; comic because most of the Mexicans eventually returned to Los Angeles, having had a trip to Mexico at the expense of the county." McWilliams, Southern California, 316–7.

Hispanic community, despite the fact that it would have been culturally appropriate. The hotel once housed the city's first French restaurant, and the French community has long been involved in the history of the area. The Plaza's northern street, was named for the city's first French-Canadian mayor, and the plaza has been the site of Bastille Day celebrations since the 1800s. As it did during the colonial period, the plaza in concert with the church, La Inglesia de Nuestra Senora de Los Angeles, which still stands on the edge of the plaza, continues to serve as an important cultural place for the Hispanic community, but other groups must be included as well.

While El Pueblo today is viewed primarily as a Mexican-American cultural space, the Plaza has always been a multi-cultural place, and ethic claims to its built heritage overlap. One of the city's oldest and most historic Chinese stores, was located in the Garnier Building, built and owned by an important French-American family. Many groups, including African-Americans as well as French, Italian and Chinese immigrants have all left their mark on the plaza. Recent efforts have been made to reflect this, including the opening of a Chinese museum to reflect the fact that the city's first Chinatown was located just east of the plaza where Union Station displaced it. In reality, the history of the Plaza truly encompasses the multi-ethnic character of the city, and it would be impossible properly represent its history without reflecting this fact.

Downtown as a Government Center

The Civic Center

After the beautification of the plaza and the creation a new public park (now known as Pershing Square) at the end of the nineteenth century, downtown backers and civic boosters fixed their sights on the creation of a grand civic center on a monumental scale appropriate for a city of growing prestige and aspirations. From the start, the effort to build a civic center was overtly an effort

to preserve the centrality of the downtown district, and covertly to maintain the property values of downtown land owners. The actual plans evolved as design theories and local government power structure changed, but the underling ideas of the project remained constant. The earliest plans for a civic center, at the dawn of the twentieth century, drew on the ideals of the City Beautiful movement, and focused on creating a center for the City of Los Angeles. The Civic Center, when it was built in the middle twentieth century, reflected the stripped down aesthetics of modernism, but retained the axial structure of earlier plans. The project had shifted from a municipal endeavor, to a County-led project; reflecting the changing power dynamic as the County of Los Angeles became more important than the City.

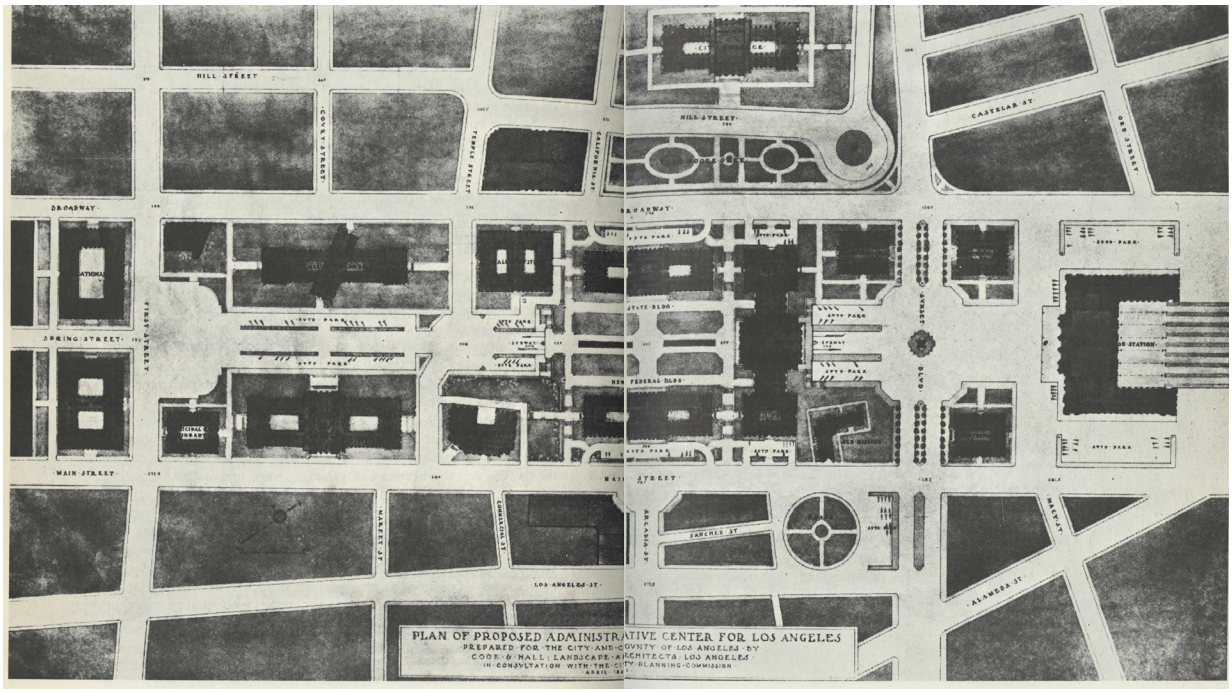
In 1922, the question of the future direction for the city's growth, whether it should be concentrated in the historic center or dispersed across the region, was put to the voters in the form of a $7.5 million dollar bond measure to finance the construction of a new city hall and civic center. Also on the ballot was the question of where the administrative center should be located. The Planning Commission, a proponent of downtown development, did not obscure its position, asking directly "Shall Los Angeles continue its haphazard growth with its public buildings scattered to the four winds—or—shall Los Angeles demand the economy, efficiency, and sightlines in its public buildings that can be secured only by intelligent grouping in an Administrative Center built to a definite plan?" Angelenos accepted the idea of centralized administration, and approved the plan favored by the commission.[24]

In the following years, a series of proposals were put forth for the design of civic center. While the plans varied, all contained the same elements: a city hall, county, state and federal office buildings, a union station and public space. It is worth noting, that all plans preserved the original Plaza park and church, which was often labeled as if it were also a civic building, though most

24 Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 264.

would have razed the commercial and residential structures of the Pueblo. The first plan, proposed in 1923 by Cook and Hall, envisioned a civic axis along Spring Street between First Street and Sunset Boulevard, anchored by a new union station at the north end, as shown in Figure 2-4. The Cook and Hall plan preserved the historic Plaza and church, but would have eliminated the buildings north of the small park, including the Avilla adobe, to create a parking area and connect a widened Sunset Boulevard to Alameda Street. The Allied Architects Association put forth a competing vision. The Allied Architects' plan would have leveled the top of Bunker Hill, removing the Victorian residential neighborhood, to create a monumental mall along Grand Avenue from Fourth Street to Fort Moore, as seen in Figure 2-5. A cross axis between First and Temple Streets would have led to a large square fronting a new Union Station. The scale and monumentality of the Allied Architects' plan foreshadows the Bunker Hill Redevelopment project of the 1960s. In the end, a more modest compromise plan was adopted clustering the public buildings around two open spaces, a park between Broadway and Spring Street, in the block bounded by First and Temple Streets, and a circle at the intersection of

Fig. 2-4 Cook and Hall Plan
The Cook and Hall plan organized civic buildings along an axis created along Spring Street and anchored by a union station on the north end. The Plaza and Plaza Catholic Church (mislabled here as 'Old Mission') are preserved, while Olvera Street would have been eliminated.



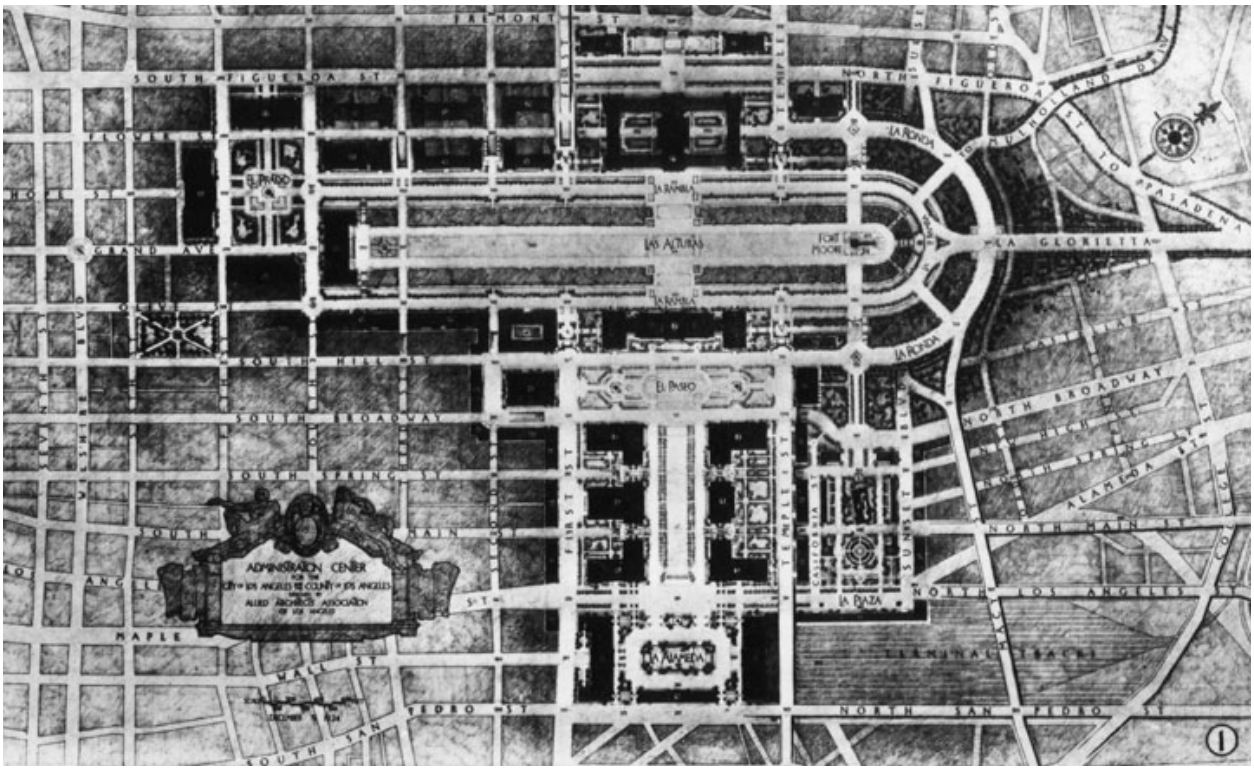


Fig. 2-5 Allied Architects' Plan
The Allied Architects' plan called for the creation of a monumental public space at the top of Bunker Hill, along Grand Avenue. The historic Plaza and Catholic Church would have been preserved (lower right), though the surrounding buildings would have been removed. A railroad station would have been located in roughly the same place as today's Union Station.

Spring Street and Sunset Boulevard, as illustrated in Figure 2-6. However, City Hall, the Federal Courthouse, the Hall of Justice and the original state office building were all built in the locations specified by this plan. City Hall, designed by the firm of John Parkinson, John C. Austin, and Albert C. Martin, was completed first, opening in 1928.

The evolving plans by Cook and Hall, Allied Architects and the compromise scheme, track the changes in how Los Angeles was perceived and presented. The earliest schemes, were centered around the historic Plaza, reflecting its role as the center of the city, but wiped away all traces of its Spanish colonial past, favoring the neo-classical style of east coast civic architecture—one proposal for recreating the Plaza as a formal park included an exact replica of Washington Union Station, as a place holder until the building could be designed and as an indicator of its inspiration. Plans of the 1920s, prior to Sterling's revival of Olvera Street, preserved the Plaza and the church, and the periphery the civic center, and proposed razing the other structures around the Plaza. However, by 1939, with Olvera Street and Union Station functioning

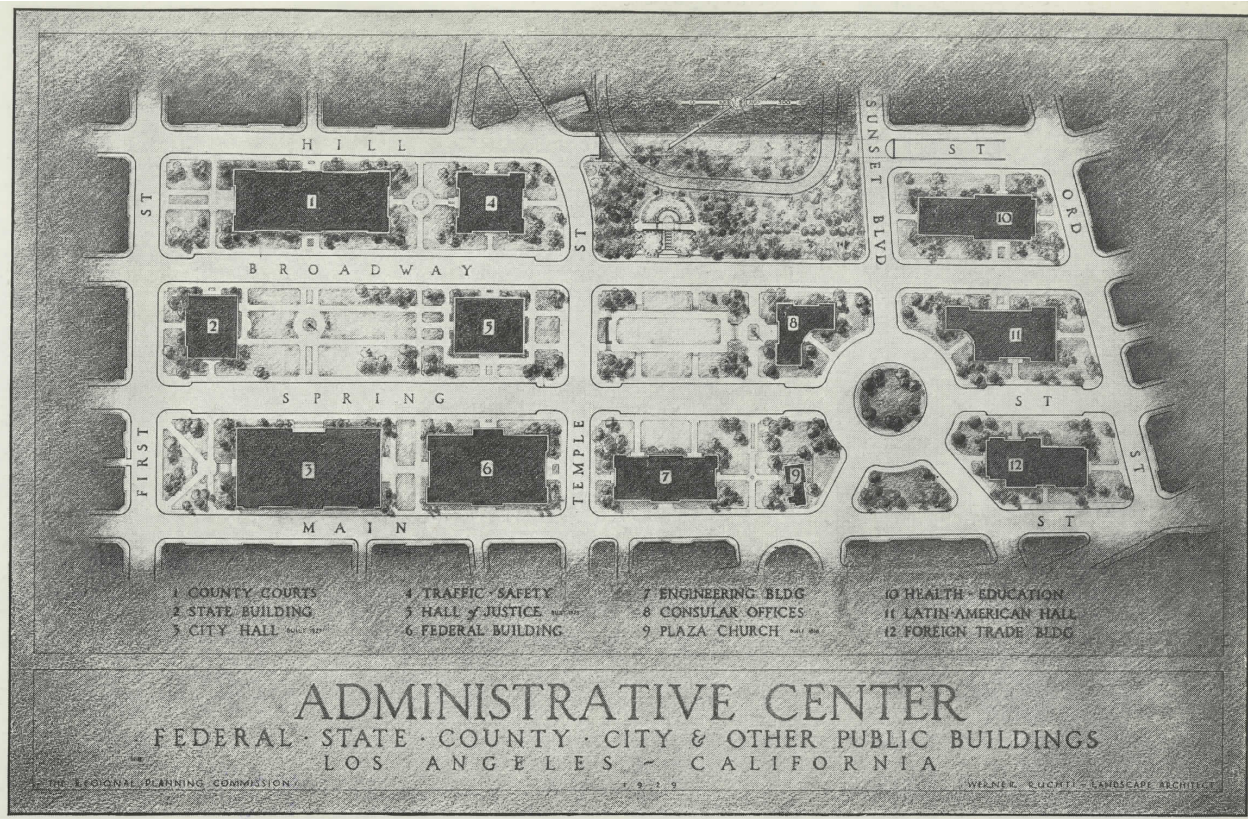


Fig. 2-6 Official Civic Center Plan
The official civic center plan, adopted in 1927, was a more modest version of the Cook and Hall proposal.

as a new gateway and destination for tourists to the region, planners sought to reconnect the Pubelo with the Civic buildings constructed around Temple and Spring Streets. One plan, put forth in 1939, which would have extended the civic center north towards the Plaza with the addition of a new federal building, literally embraced the old church, by building two curved colonnades, reminiscent of Bernini's plan for the Piazza di San Pietro, as shown in Figure 2-7. However, the period of municipal growth had already passed. While the City of Los Angeles grew in area through the 1920s, as outlying areas accepted its control in exchange for access to its water rights, in the ensuing decades the majority of growth in Los Angeles County would come from other independent cities, not subject to the control of the Mayor and City Council of Los Angeles.

As municipal power declined in the postwar period, Civic Center construction continued under the auspices of the County of Los Angeles. During the mid-twentieth century, the County

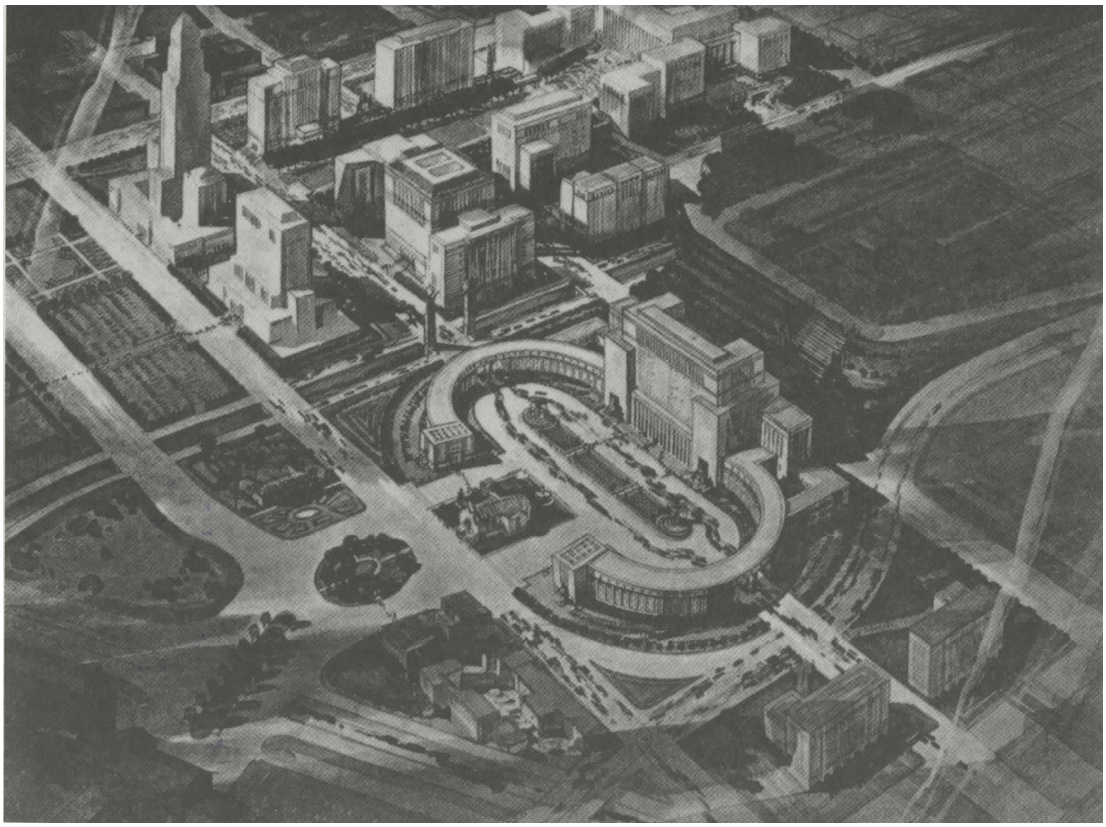
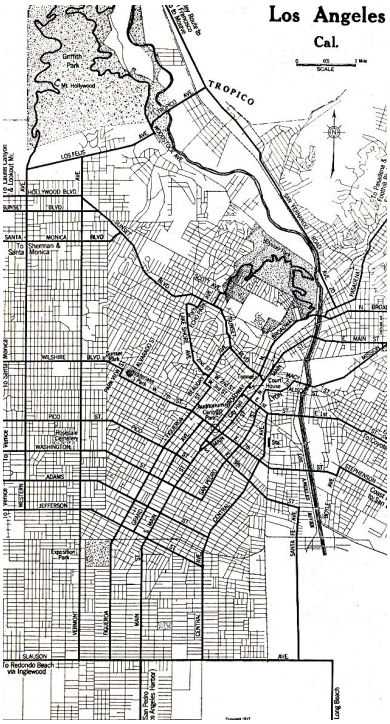


Fig. 2-6 Sumner Spaulding Plan
This vision, proposed in 1939, would have expanded the Civic Center around the Plaza Church. Los Angeles Union Station, which opened the same year, is visible in the lower left corner.

constructed four new buildings, forming the core of the current Civic Center, and two underground parking garages, on top of which were developed public parks. During this period, the City struggled to preserve Downtown while promoting freeway expansion and suburbanization. The City's internal conflict is reflected in the administration of Mayor Norris Poulson, whose official portrait depicts the mayor against a backdrop of the Hollywood Freeway and parking lots created by Civic Center construction. During his term, from 1953-1961 the City entered into an agreement with the County and State to acquire in the State's name the old Plaza and surrounding areas for the development of a state historical monument. Norris was ambivalent in his approach to city policy, promoting freeway construction and the expansion of the international airport, as well as smog control and the rehabilitation of Downtown.[25] Addressing the centrifugal forces enveloping the city, Norris said "Sure we've decentralized here in Los Angeles, but we've got to

25 City of Los Angeles, Cultural Affairs Department, *Mayors of Los Angeles*, 38.



Los Angeles Street Map, circa 1917
The streets of Downtown, at the center of the image, are offset from the cardinal directions, in contrast to those streets west and south of the city center.

support and strengthen the downtown area. It's my notion that no city can be a great city without a strong downtown core."[26] Norris's stubborn belief in the importance of Downtown characterized the political establishment during this period; even at the height of suburbanization, the economic and political establishment of Los Angeles did not cease to promote the central city.

Downtown as a Business and Financial Center

Wilshire Boulevard and Bunker Hill

As the city grew during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the original streets of the pueblo were extended, continuing their non-conformity to the Jeffersonian grid. In this way, though their names were Anglicized, *Calle Principal* becoming Main Street, or aggrandized, *Calle de los Negros* renamed as Los Angeles Street, the streets maintained a connection to the colonial past of the city, and a direct connection to its historic center. In contrast, Wilshire Boulevard was laid out on a perfectly east-west axis, extending from the edge of the original Spanish city westward through undeveloped land. These two contrasting street patterns, the urban grid and the highway corridor, reflect two different visions of urban development: slow, concentric outward expansion from the urban core versus rapid development along transportation corridor. It was along Wilshire Boulevard that the first battle was fought in the war to preserve downtown as the commercial center of Los Angeles.

Wilshire Boulevard was originally created as a part of a real estate development; however, in the 1920s, Wilshire Boulevard was reconceived as the centerpiece of a highway and parkway network for Los Angeles. The *Major Traffic Plan*, created by Fredrick Law Olmstead Jr. and Hartland Bartholomew, envisioned a mega-grid of major boulevards every mile. Facilitating vehicular movement was the primary concern of the *Major Traffic Plan*, which stated "The congestion problem of Los Angeles is exceeded by that of no other city." Wilshire Boulevard was widened to serve as

26 Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 57–8.

the primary east-west route, becoming a parkway linking Los Angeles with the coastal city of Santa Monica, and the new developments of Beverly Hills and Westwood.[27]

In the 1920s it was zoned only for residential uses; however, as it became a well-trafficked artery across the Basin, landowners, represented by the Wilshire Boulevard Association, petitioned the City to allow commercial uses. The Planning Commission opposed this plan, arguing that it would undermine the viability of the Downtown commercial district and worsen traffic congestion; the City Council overruled the Commission's decision, and rezoned the boulevard for commercial use fromWestlake to Western Ave. The issue was eventually put to the voters, who upheld the council's action. Land owners along Wilshire Boulevard west of Western Avenue sought the same rezoning, and formed the West Wilshire Development Association to advocate for the change. Once again the Planning Commission, backed by Downtown business interests, refused to allow increased commercial development. However, so many use variances were issued by the City Council as to effectively rezone the length of the boulevard for commercial use. Thus beginning in the 1920s and '30s, Wilshire Boulevard developed into a sort of linear downtown. Street improvements such as left turn lanes and large font street signs, catered to motorists, making the boulevard the forerunner of commercial strip developments across the country.[28]

By the 1930s, the network of surface routes laid out according to Olmstead and Bartholomew's plan were already congested, as road building encouraged more auto use, and planners began to envision new road networks to facilitate speed of travel and support decentralized development.[29] The new network would prioritize auto use exclusively—pedestrians and cyclists would be banned from these high-speed routes, and cross traffic would

Arroyo Seco Parkway
Illustration of the Arroyo Seco Parkway, which opened in 1940 linking Pasadena and Downtown Los Angeles

27 Lynxwiler and Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 85
28 Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 260–262.
29 In 1920 there were only 160,530 private autos registered in Los Angeles County; by 1930, 806,264. Gebhard, Von Breton, and Gebhard, *Los Angeles in the Thirties*, 1931-1941, 18.

Cahuenga Pass
View of the Cahuenga (now Hollywood) Freeway, looking towards the Los Angeles Basin and Downtown Pacific-Electric streetcar tracks are visible in the median. *USC Digital Archive*

pass over or under them. The first of these new limited-access expressways was the Arroyo Seco Parkway, which opened in segments beginning in 1939. The route linked Downtown Los Angeles and the growing suburb of Pasadena by way of the Arroyo Seco—a tributary of the Los Angeles River, which was channelized during the construction of the parkway. The design of the Arroyo Seco Parkway retained Olmstead's concept of landscaped parkways, incorporating landscaped medians and naturalistic curves following the watercourse; however, it also illustrates the focus on high-speed traffic movement that would come to define later freeways. The freeway age in Los Angeles began in earnest in 1942, with the opening of the Cahuenga (now Hollywood) Freeway linking the Los Angeles with the San Fernando Valley. Stripped of the park-like features of the four-lane Arroyo Seco Parkway, the eight-lane Cahuenga Freeway, which featured a Pacific Electric tracks in its median, was designed solely as a high-speed transportation corridor.[30] These early freeways still reflect the centrality of Downtown; much like the streetcar network, they run diagonally across the city, forming a web with Downtown at the center. In 1941, the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission issued the *Master Plan of Highways for Los Angeles County*, which laid out a bold new vision for decentralized, suburban development:

> The Commission, therefore, believes that … it is necessary and desirable to provide for the future population in this region by encouraging the development of various smaller cities and towns throughout the region…rather than the by the indiscriminate and unbroken expansion of the central urban area…This region should remain one in which the single-family dwelling predominates.[31]

In the following decades, Los Angeles built hundreds of miles of new freeways forming a grid across the county; by midcentury, Downtown Los Angeles was no longer the center of the city, but rather just one of many nodes on the transportation network.

By the 1960s, two decades of freeway building created hundreds of

30 Ibid., 23.
31 Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission, *Master Plan of Highways for Los Angeles County*, 22.

decentralized commercial centers across the city. Commentators hailed Los Angeles as a new prototype for urban development; however, the Downtown establishment did not accept the idea of a future in which the central city was not the most important business district of the city. As Richard Austin Smith observed in 1965,

> Somewhat ironically, just at the time when Los Angeles is attracting attention as a nascent supercity of the future, a group of influential citizens is trying to make it over in conformance with the 'classic city' patterns of the past. The idea, promulgated in a series of 'Centropolis' studies, was that every great city of the nation had a downtown core or center and L.A. would have to have one too.[32]

The Centropolis studies confirmed that while downtown once had "a virtual monopoly on all major activities in Los Angeles," commercial uses were being dispersed throughout the region.[33] At the same time, Bunker Hill, a once-fashionable residential neighborhood built around the turn-of-the-century, was perceived as crowded, decaying, crime-ridden by the mid-twentieth century as its mansions were divided into boardinghouses and the neighborhood became more racially mixed. This image of urban blight was promulgated by official reports as well as Hollywood crime films of the 1940s and '50s, such as *Criss Cross* (1949), *Cry Danger* (1951), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1956), all of which were filmed on Bunker Hill; in 1939, the New Deal Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) completed a study of housing conditions on Bunker Hill that concluded, "Subversive racial elements predominate…it is a slum area and one of the city's melting pots."[34] For this reason, and because of its location between to the Civic Center, historic core and the planned Harbor Freeway, Bunker Hill was targeted for redevelopment.

Bunker Hill Redevelopment
The under-construction Union Bank tower rises behind 1880s homes awaiting demolition. *Los Angeles Times / UCLA Library*

In response to the decline of the central business district, city leaders conceived of the Downtown's largest public project to date: a plan to raze the aging residential neighborhood on Bunker

32 Richard Austin Smith, "Los Angeles," 100.
33 Centropolis study quoted in Ibid.
34 Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 58, 73–4.

Hill, flatten the topography, improve auto access, assemble large parcels of land and give them to developers to construct high-rise office buildings. Using the newly created powers of urban renewal, the City established a redevelopment agency to finance and oversee the project.[35] Downtown business leaders enthusiastically supported the Bunker Hill redevelopment project; Walter Braunschweiger, executive vice president of Bank of America and chairman of the Los Angeles Central City Committee, summarized the opinion of the business community:

> Los Angeles has a remarkable opportunity to proceed with the development of a new downtown. There is a need for new, larger structures and for investors to build buildings and for to build a city…[T]he plan can enhance the values of the Los Angeles central area as the headquarters for business and as a cultural and recreational center.[36]

Noticeably absent from Braunschweiger's statement is any mention of residential development, for while Downtown had traditionally housed a large number of residents, the mid-century vision for a new Downtown viewed it as a business and cultural district; employees and visitors were expected to commute by car to the city center. While 396 buildings were torn down, and over 11,000 residents were displaced by the project, only a minimal amount of housing was constructed—and most of it was unaffordable to the former residents of the hill.[37]

As a modernist project, auto-access and separation of uses were the governing principles for the design of the new Bunker Hill. Fourth Street was transformed into a grade-separated expressway, linking massive parking garages on the hill with the newly completed Harbor Freeway. Grand Avenue was remade as a two-level thoroughfare, with pedestrians and autos on the upper level and service vehicles and garage entrances on the lower. Throughout the project, pedestrian circulation was provided by a system of elevated overpasses. These walkways not only connected buildings across streets, but substituted for ground-level sidewalk along some streets. Along Figueroa

35 Soja, *Thirdspace*, 214.
36 Quoted in Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 58.
37 Soja, *Thirdspace*, 206.

Street, a series of elevated concrete ped-ways were constructed—freeway engineering applied to pedestrian facilities design. Whether the system was the invention of freeway engineers or the concrete lobby, it was clearly designed to serve motorists, rather than walkers, by clearing the streets of pedestrians, which one City report referred to as "the largest single obstacle to free traffic movement."[38] As many urban observers have noted, the auto-oriented design and segregated pedestrian facilities, killed the ability of Downtown streets to support retail and pedestrian-oriented commercial uses, which were instead clustered inside the mega-structures constructed on Bunker Hill.

While the Bunker Hill project succeeded in retaining corporate headquarters Downtown, and in creating new cultural institutions, it failed to preserve the centrality of the district in the minds of city residents. Smith predicted this in 1965, writing "Whatever glass and steel monuments may be built downtown, the essence of Los Angeles, its true identifying characteristic, is mobility."[39] Later critics have cited the designed exclusivity and lack of civic space of the project as the reason it failed to regenerate the city center. "L.A. has no center of gravity, where you stood and knew that you were in the heart of the city," wrote Peter Theroux in 1994. "Downtown L.A., visible from almost anywhere, was both overbuilt and empty, designed to be unfriendly—the bus benches were shaped like logs so that homeless people could not recline on them. There was no equivalent of the Mall in Washington or Central Park in New York."[40] Others, from Jan Rowan to John Arroyo have argued that "the affluent do not want or need civic space;"[41] as Rowan writes, "To be able to choose what you want to be and how you want to live, without worrying about social censure, is obviously more important to Angelenos than the fact that they do not have a Piazza San Marco." However, recent changes Downtown and across the city have called into question these assertions about Los Angeles.

38 Francis and Marcus, *People Places*, 13.
39 Richard Austin Smith, "Los Angeles."
40 Theroux, *Translating LA*, 32.
41 John Arroyo, *Culture in Concrete*,154.

Downtown as an Entertainment Center

South Park and L.A. Live

The forces of decentralization have most greatly affected the retail and entertainment sectors, which were among the earliest uses to become decentralized. As in most American cities, retail and entertainment uses, such as department stores and cinemas, were historically concentrated in the urban center. Beginning in the 1930's, department stores began to develop along a stretch of Wilshire Boulevard between Western and Fairfax Avenues, approximately six miles west of Downtown in a previously undeveloped area. During the 20th century, retail continued to disperse, following the trend of residential development. New formal models emerged, such as the open-air shopping mall, pioneered in Lakewood in the mid-twentieth century.[42] This form evolved into the enclosed shopping mall of the 1970s and '80s, which became as ubiquitous symbols of suburban Los Angeles as the freeways. Cinemas and other entertainment venues followed residents and retail outlets into the suburbs. However, in recent years both retail and entertainment are making a resurgence Downtown.

Bullocks Wilshire
With its 241-foot tower, the 1929 Bullocks Wilshire building was designed to attract the attention of passing motorists.
California State Library

Until the end of the 1920s, Broadway was the center of retail and entertainment in Los Angeles. Theatres and department stores were clustered there. The street was literally synonymous with the city's largest retailer, The Broadway, which had operated on its namesake street since 1895.[43] However, in 1929 Bullock's Wilshire, opened along Wilshire Boulevard, becoming the first high-end department store outside of Downtown. The five-story store featured a slim 241-foot tower that served to attract the attention of passing motorists and reflected the design of Los Angeles City Hall, which was also designed by the same architect and opened the previous year. In a reversal of traditional retail design, its primary entrance was located to the rear, facing the parking lot. Bullock's Wilshire represented a new era in retail

42 Waldie, *Holy Land*.
43 Eric Richardson, "Blogdowntown."

design and in the development of the city.[44]

While Downtown clung to past, Wilshire represented the future and the auto age with rear parking and billboards. Numerous improvements were made to the street to enhance traffic flow: it became the first street in the city to have painted lane lines, added 1929, and in 1931 all traffic signals along the Boulevard were synchronized from Westlake to Beverly Hills.[45] During the same period, new residential communities were being developed along what would become known as the Westside. Real estate developers, like A.W. Ross saw the opportunity to develop retail to cater to the needs of the new suburbanites. Ross, projected that residents in new communities like Beverly Hills would not want to travel Downtown Los Angeles to shop, estimated that people would be willing to travel a maximum of four miles to reach retail. Calculating four-mile radii around new residential developments, he bought land were the four-mile circles overlapped near the La Brea Tar Pits along Wilshire Boulevard.[46] He convinced Downtown department stores such as May Co. to open locations along his stretch of Wilshire Boulevard, which became known as the Miracle Mile reflecting its unexpected development. Today, a bust of Ross planted in the median of Wilshire Boulevard identifies him as "Founder and developer of the miracle mile [with the] vision to see, wisdom to know, [and] courage to do."[47]

Like retail, theatres and other entertainment venues were once concentrated in Downtown, but as the city grew they too dispersed, following new real estate developments. Carthay Circle, a neighborhood just off Ross's Miracle Mile and named for developer J. Harvey McCarthy, was one such development. McCarthy, a member of the Native Sons of the Golden West whose father was a forty-niner, was enamored with the rich history of the state, which he used as the theme for his new suburban development. While the names of the streets evoked

44 Los Angeles Conservancy, "Curating the City: Wilshire Blvd."; Lynxwiler and Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*.
45 Lynxwiler and Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 87.
46 Ibid., 125.
47 Ibid., 121.

California's pioneer past, the development was oriented towards the emerging entertainment industry; its main avenue, McCarthy Vista, terminated at a majestic movie palace—the Carthay Circle Theatre. The mission-revival theatre, which opened in 1926, represented the merging of California's romantic past with its glamorous future. Movie premieres, once a Downtown affair, followed the decentralization of entertainment venues: Walt Disney's first full-length animated film, *Snow White*, premiered at the Carthay Circle Theatre in 1937; and *Gone With the Wind* debuted there in 1939. The theatre made the Miracle Mile into an entertainment center, while new cinemas along Hollywood Boulevard, including the famed Chinese and Egyptian Theatres, further eroded Downtown's role as the center of entertainment for the region.[48]

Beginning in the 1930s, the area north of the Miracle Mile centered around the Farmer's Market at Third and Fairfax Avenues and known as the Fairfax District, developed as a sports, entertainment and retail center. In 1935, the Pan-Pacific Auditorium opened, becoming the city's largest event center, hosting sporting events, political rallies and concerts. Gillmore Field, located nearby, was another early sports venue, which hosted baseball games and other outdoor events prior to the construction of Dodger Stadium in the 1960s. In 1952, CBS opened its Television City studios across the street, creating the city's first cluster of live-event spaces and studio facilities for live television broadcasts. However, for most of the twentieth century, event spaces and entertainment centers continued to disperse rather than cluster: the city's most famous entertainment spaces, the Hollywood Bowl, Dodger Stadium, and the Los Angeles (Great Western) Forum, were all anti-urban venues, accessible only by automobile.

Recent trends suggest the possibility of resurgence in Downtown as a retail and entertainment center—or at least an increased consumer preference for retail environments which mimic many

48 Ibid., 133.

of the characteristics of downtown. By the end of the twentieth century many of the enclosed shopping centers were reintegrated into the urban form by removing their roofs and reconnecting streets that were bisected by the original development. This can be seen in Santa Monica and Pasadena, where formerly enclosed shopping centers have been opened up to great success. More recently, developers of retail centers have begun to incorporate the elements of downtown. The Grove, developed in 2002 by Rick Caruso, was the first of this new model. Adjacent to CBS Television City and the Farmers Market, it features varied facades which suggest different buildings, a pedestrianized street complete with curbs, and a functioning streetcar. However, the Grove is fundamentally a traditional suburban shopping center cloaked in an urban theme; like most traditional malls it is still single-use and features a large parking garage and turns a blank wall to the public street. Caruso's next development, the Americana in Glendale, replicates the downtown experience much more faithfully. Like the Grove, the Americana features a mix of popular retailers arranged around an open space complete with an electric trolley; however, it is located in the city's traditional core with retail uses fronting its main street. Apartments, located above the shops, reintroduce the concept of mixed-use to shopping districts. Compared to the 1980s-era, enclosed Glendale Galleria, which it abuts, the Americana appears to be a radical new direction for retail centers.

The trend towards Downtown Los Angeles's re-emergence as the entertainment center for the region has its roots in the 1970s, with the development of the Los Angeles Convention Center, which replaced the Pan-Pacific Auditorium as the city's premiere indoor events center, but did not begin in earnest until the 1990s, after the revival of rail transit in the region. In 1990, the Blue Line light-rail line was opened linking Downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach, with a station serving the Convention Center area. The convention center itself was expanded in 1993, and again in 1997. In 1999, the city's two professional basketball

teams and its NHL franchise abandoned the aging Forum in suburban Inglewood for the new Staples Center arena, which was constructed adjacent to the convention center. The Convention Center area mirrored the development of the Fairfax district as a sports and entertainment center in the mid-twentieth century, with the addition of the Nokia Theatre and an ESPN podcast studio, in 2007 and 2009 respectively. The area, known as LA Live, is becoming the center of the region's entertainment industry: events which were once dispersed across the city, such as NBA and NHL games, the Emmy Awards, the Grammy Awards, and the Finale of American Idol, are now all held in Downtown Los Angeles.[49] In 2011, the City of Los Angeles approved the construction of a football stadium adjacent to the Staples Center, replacing part of the Convention Center. The Stadium, known as Farmer's Field, will feature 68,000 seats with the ability to expand to hold up to 78,000 spectators for special events, is most notable for what it will not include: unlike Dodger Stadium or the Los Angeles Forum, Farmer's Field will not be surrounded by surface parking lots—instead it will be integrated into the urban fabric with the majority of attendees expected to arrive by transit.[50]

The development of Farmers Field represents the apex of a dramatic shift that have taken place in the past two decades. Since the opening of the Blue Line only one new freeway has been built in the region; however, in that time two new subway lines, three new light-rail lines, and two new bus-rapid transit lines, and seven new commuter rail-lines have been built, and more are on the way. The idea of building a football stadium in Downtown Los Angeles, let alone one without expansive surface parking that would be served primarily by transit, would have been inconceivable twenty years ago. Today it represents a bold new vision for Downtown Los Angeles in the twenty-first century.

49 Since 2008, the Emmy Awards have been held at the Nokia Theare, with the after-show Governor's Ball held at the adjacent Los Angeles Convention Center.
50 Farmers Field, "Our Plan."

Union Station
Four Visions, Reflected

Over the years, Los Angeles Union Station has come to embody all of these visions in its built form or in revitalization plans for the landmark. Though it is a public building today, when it opened in 1939 the station, like most of Downtown, was "Dedicated to the spirit of private enterprise and the continuing growth of Southern California."[51] As with prior and future Downtown planning efforts, the development of Union Station was promoted by the city's Downtown business establishment, and careful crafted to present their vision of Los Angeles.

The station's architecture reflects the revived interest in the city's Spanish colonial past that came with the creation of Olvera Street, and the optimistic vision of civic boosters, who believed it would "mark a new epoch in the history of transportation in southern California."[52] The station's stucco façade, red-tile roof, clock tower, intricately painted wooden ceiling and adjoining courtyards with their flowering bird-of-paradise plants, swaying palm trees and bubbling fountains, reflect not just the historic Missions of California but also the romance and beauty associated with colonial period by Jackson and Sterling. While the station was designed as an advertisement for the region, it none-the-less succeeds both functionally and aesthetically as a public building. As architectural critic Paul Hunter wrote at the time, "Certainly, I know of no other city in which arriving passengers leave the station through an open patio, filled with bright flowers, shady pepper trees, and flanked by tall palms. This scheme undoubtedly originated with local publicity men, but they certainly have hit upon an ideal introduction to Southern California."[53] However, the architectural style of the station is not simply mission-revival, but a mix of Spanish colonial and streamline modern. The clean lines of the tower, smooth exterior walls, and the addition of a

Union Station South Patio
The station's courtyards greet arriving passengers with a setting that optimized the image of the city as a Spanish-colonial garden paradise. *Author photo, 2012*

51 Bradley, The Last of the Great Stations, 11.
52 Ibid., 6.
53 Paul Hunter, "An Architect's Impressions of New Los Angeles Union Railroad Station," 18.

strong horizontal element to the façade as the entry overhang, all typify this architectural style. The subdued color pallet of earth tones, with beige walls and contrasting dark trim, which is characteristic of the streamline modern style, is also reflect of the adobe missions and evocative of the semi-arid landscape of Southern California. This combination of styles reflects the duality of city's self-image and the central tension of Los Angeles. Even as the city was becoming a modern metropolis with the construction of a new landmark station, city leaders sought to preserve the open, anti-ubran character of the city's idealized past. Construction of the station can also be seen as part of the civic center project, and was designed by the same architect as City Hall. The station's function of bringing all the city's rail lines together in a single, centrally-located modern union station reflects the ideals of order and efficiency expressed in both the progressive era and modernist period.

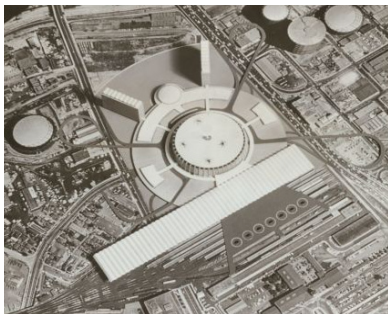
The fanfare that accompanied the opening of the station not only reflected back on the history of rail transportation, with an epic pageant entitled "The Romance of the Rails," it also presented a vision for the future of rail transportation. Streamline moderne locomotives were on display, adorned with banners promoting "Future Prosperity."[54] Alas, it was not to be. While the station served over a hundred trains a day during the Second World War, it was quickly eclipsed in importance by freeway and air travel after the war. In the 1950s, Union Station and Olvera Street were cut-off from the rest of Downtown by the construction the Hollywood Freeway—the visual icon of the city in the auto age. Attempts were made to revive the station as a transportation hub: one ambitious scheme proposed in 1958 by architect J. Edward Martin would have turned the station into a jet-age hub with the addition of a $20 million dollar air terminal reminiscent of William Pereira and Charles Luckman's iconic Theme Building at LAX, which opened in 1961.[55] The following year the City of Los Angeles endorsed a plan to rename the station the "Union

54 Bradley, *The Last of the Great Stations*.
55 Eric Richardson, "Blogdowntown."

Transportation Terminal" and transform it into a multi-modal hub into a hub for trains, buses and helicopters. The scale and design of these proposals, mirrors that of the Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project and John Portman's 1976 Bonaventure Hotel.

In the 1970s, as historic structures across the country were being repurposed as retail destinations—a historic preservation model pioneered by Olvera Street a half century before—there was renewed interest in Los Angeles Union Station. The railroad companies which owned the station enlisted the architectural and planning firm of Daniel Mann Johnson and Mendenhall (DMJM) to design a reuse plan for the station. Their proposal would have preserved the historic exterior and outdoor patios, allowed its continued use as an Amtrak terminal and created an outdoor rail museum; however, it would have significantly altered the historic interiors of the station to create a themed-retail destination. The DMJM plan would have filled in the southern colonnade, and subdivided magnificent interior spaces of the waiting room and entrance hall into retail locations. While the developers were able to secure a 55-year lease for the station complex, mercifully for the station's historic interiors, the project fell through. However, the proposal raised the idea that the station could be revived as a destination and public place. As Robert Kite, an associate at DMJM wrote at the time, "the most important economic aspect of this whole project is its good location. It's in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, adjacent to the historic El Pueblo de Los Angeles, Little Tokyo, the civic center, the convention center and the financial center. The station itself can be a giant tourist attraction and is expected to pull in about three million people in the first year, probably twice that number eventually."[56]

In recent decades, the station has become a civic center in its own right. A 1995 project created the station's east gateway plaza and added the 26 story (628,000 square-foot) One Gateway



Jet-Age Vision for Union Station
J. Edward Martin's 1958 plan for Union Station featured a six-story circular structure, which would have been "built like a 'sandwich,' with heliport and control tower on the roof and passenger concourses, long-haul bus terminals and commuter surface-line interchanges on lower levels," according to the ***Los Angeles Times***. *USC Digital Archive*

LAX Theme Building

56 Education Facilities Laboratories and the National Endowment for the Arts, *Reusing Railroad Stations: Book Two*, 24.

Plaza tower, to house the headquarters of the newly created Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, as well as a 10 bay bus plaza, known as the Patsaouras Transit Plaza, and 2,700 underground parking spaces.[57] In 1998, a ten-story (530,000 square-foot) office building and 768 underground parking spaces were added to the south of the main station complex to house the Metropolitan Water District (MWD).[58] While the Metro Headquarters is reasonably sited at the station, which serves as the hub for the Metro-opperated subway and light-rail network, the MWD has no connection to the station's history, and might have been more appropriately sited elsewhere. Its development simply reflects the early-twentieth century vision that Downtown should be the location of government agencies.

The development of the station in the 1990s followed the *Alameda District Specific Plan*, adopted by the city in 1996. The plan entitled the site for nearly seven million square feet of new development, including the Metropolitan Water District office buildings, which was constructed pursuant to the plan, but not the existing Metro Headquarters. In addition to government offices, the plan envisioned up to 4.8 million square feet of commercial office space; a 750-room hotel and conference center; 300 residential units; a 30,0000 square-foot "Urban Entertainment Center" immediately behind the historic station building; and, a 625,000 square foot sports arena straddling the station tracks.[59] Thus, the City's 1996 plan represents a confused vision for the site that combined elements of each previous downtown redevelopment scheme. While some elements of the plan were constructed, including the government office space and residential units, the planned entertainment, hotel and sports center never developed.

In 2011, Metro purchased the 40-acre Union Station site from Catellus Development, and launched its own master planning process to envision the future of the site, setting the stage for a new vision for the future of Downtown Los Angeles.[60]

57 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), "Union Station Master Plan: Industry Review Meeting."

58 Ibid.

59 City of Los Angeles, *Alameda District Specific Plan: A Part of the General Plan - City of Los Angeles*, 4–6.

60 Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), "Union Station Master Plan: Industry Review Meeting."

3

Current + Emerging Trends

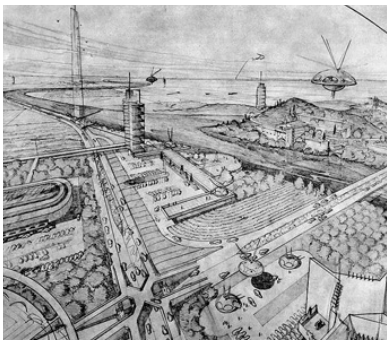
Forces Reshaping Los Angeles in the 21st Century

This chapter examines the trends which are reshaping Los Angeles in the new millennium.

Twenty-first century Los Angeles will look radically different than the city of the twentieth century. Already, three new trends are transforming the city, turning twentieth-century patterns of development on their head: densification, demographic change and the rise of transit. In the past, the city grew by expanding onto rural areas on the urban edge; today, the little undeveloped land remains. As the city increases in population, but not in area, it will necessarily become more dense. Historically, Los Angeles has been majority-white city, which experienced significant racial tension as immigration increased the number of minority groups in the city; now, twenty years after the multi-racial civic unrest of 1992, the city is more racial diverse but also safer, more stable and better integrated than ever before. During the twentieth century, the public invested heavily in the construction of high-speed arterial boulevards and freeways, which facilitated low-density, decentralized development; since 2000, public investment in transportation has focused on subway, light-rail and bus rapid transit, with service focused on the urban core. These trends suggest that a new model of urban development is emerging, which will replace the decentralized model of the late twentieth century without returning to the monocentric city model of the nineteen and early twentieth centuries.

The End of Sprawl

The Densification of Los Angeles



'The Living City,' 1958
Sketch of Wright's Broadacre City
The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation

Carmageddon, 2011
Photo of I-405 Freeway and Hotel Angeleno in Brentwood, Los Angeles, during the 2011 closure of the Sepulveda Pass.
mehdibouquaphotos.blogspot.com

For most of its history, Southern California was a rural area, dominated by agriculture; today the region exists as an urban metropolis. From the base of Tejon Pass in the north, to Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base one hundred miles south, and from the beaches of Santa Monica Bay in the west, to the San Bernardino National Forest eighty miles east, the landscape of Los Angeles is characterized by an unbroken spread of urban development. Urban sprawl has reached the natural boundaries of the Los Angeles Basin, with suburban homes pushing against the Pacific Ocean and the San Gabriel Mountains. While the region is expected to add more than six million residents in the next three decades, there is little room for the urbanized area to expand physically as it has done in the past. In some cases, development has leapfrogged the natural boundaries of the region: in northeast Los Angeles County the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, which lie in the Mojave Desert on the far side of the San Gabriel Mountains from the rest of Los Angeles, have experienced rapid population growth in recent decades. However, most growth is projected to occur within the already urbanized area, where employment opportunities remain concentrated. As the City of Los Angeles, and the regional as whole, become more populated without greatly increasing in area, Southern California will necessarily become more dense; this trend is a departure from the twentieth century pattern of decentralized development.

Los Angeles was originally envisioned, planned and developed as a low-rise community of detached houses. Thus the city as it was built, was the realization of early-twentieth-century visions for decentralized urban development such as Ebenezer Howard's Garden City and Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City. Through the end of the twentieth century, the majority of units built in Los Angeles were single-family homes: sixty percent of new residences built in Los Angeles County in 1993 were single-family residences, and only forty percent were units in multi-family complexes. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, that trend was reversed: in 2006, only

38 percent of new residential units built in Los Angeles County were single-family while 62 percent were apartments or condos. This trend holds even in the most traditionally suburban parts of Los Angeles: between 2000 and 2006, the City of Los Angeles approved the construction of over 14,000 condos and apartments in the San Fernando Valley—nearly three times the number of single-family residences approved. Likewise in Orange County, multifamily housing has outpaced the development of single-family homes since 2005: during the first half of 2007, before the collapse of the housing market in 2008, twice as many apartments and condos than detached homes were under construction.[1] Even in Riverside, San Bernadino and Ventura Counties, where the region's last acres of farmland remain, new suburban development is taking a more urban form. Across the five-county Southern California region, an area larger than Indiana and twelve other states, nearly half of the units constructed in 2006 were apartments or condos, and the number of multi-family residences is projected to outpace single-family homes in future decades.[2]

The shift from single-family homes to multi-family units has implications for public space in Los Angeles. The twentieth century city, provided diffused, private open space in the form of enclosed back yards. Along with the privatization of transportation with the automobile, the provision of private open space reduced the perceived need for public space within the city. Norm Klein articulated this in his work *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*:

> Architecturally speaking, [the freeway network] completed a process whereby the point that one entered public spaces was narrowed considerably, while the privacy within the auto was enhanced. This fits into a broader, long-standing policy from the twenties on. Instead of Griffith Park, Elysian Park, or the lush bamboo in Pershing Square, more of the landscape was privatized: fewer new parks and more backyards; eventually a transition to the shopping mall, to the theme park (not to mention the fantasy architecture so common to L.A.). Of course, as early as 1905, the city was already refusing offers

1 Sharon Bernstein, "Southern California Is Becoming a Tight Fit," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 2007.

2 At more than 38,000 square miles in size, the five–county Southern California region is larger than the states of Indiana, Maine, South Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Hawaii, Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island. Southern California Association of Governments, "About SCAG, the Nation's Largest Metropolitan Planning Organization", (http://www.scag.ca.gov/about.htm, accessed May 2012).

for donations of park land, as if this seemed beside the point.[3]

With more and more Southern Californians living in multi-family housing, demand for public space is likely to increase: future Angelenos will look to the public realm for outdoor space that earlier generations found in their own backyards.

In the past decade, Downtown Los Angeles has reemerged as a center of growth. Despite the recent recession, Downtown Los Angeles nearly 3,000 new residential units were built between 2008 and 2011, an increase of eleven percent. Today, Downtown Los Angeles is home to over 45,000 residents, up fifteen percent since the start of the recession and an increase of more than sixty percent since 2000.[4] Changes in city policy, such as the adoption of an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance in 1999, which made it easier for existing commercial buildings to be converted for residential uses, helped facilitate this growth; however, the resurgence of downtown is also supported by underlying economic principles.

"[Historically white-dominated] Westside communities are taking their cue from their [historically Latino] Eastside counterparts and learning to enjoy the pleasures of street life…

Changing Demographics

The Increasing Diversity of Los Angeles

In the coming decades, Los Angeles, and California as a whole, will continue to increase in population; however, both the rate and sources of population growth are projected to change. For most of its history, California has grown as people move to the state from other parts of the country and other parts of the world. In recent decades, this trend has slowed. During the recent economic crisis, more people have left the state than moved to it; given the high cost of living and doing business in the Golden State, California is no longer as attractive a destination as it once was. These trends can be observed today: in 2010, the percentage of Californians who moved here from another state reached a 100-year low, at 18 percent.[5] That year also marks the first time in a century that the majority of California residents were born in the state.[6] Fast growing southern states like Texas,

3 Klein, *The History of Forgetting*, 83–4.

4 In 2000, the residential population of Downtown Los Angeles was 27,849 according to the US Census. By 2008, it had increased to 39,537 according to the DCBID 2008 Demographic Study. Downtown Center Business Improvement District, *Downtown Los Angeles Demographic Study 2011* (Los Angeles, CA: 2011), 14.

5 Gale Holland and Sam Quinones, "California Demographic Shift: More People Leaving Than Moving In," *Los Angeles Times*, (November 27, 2011).

6 2010 American Community Survey cited in Agustin Armendariz, "More Than Half of Calif. Residents Born in State",*California Watch*, November 17, 2011.

with little regulation and lots of available land (both of which were once the hallmarks of Southern California), are poised to be suburban frontiers of the next century. Even if California is not expected to relive the population booms of its past, neither is it expected to wither away like the rustbelt states. In the twenty-first century, California will be remade from within: by 2050 the state's population is projected to reach nearly 60 million, with most of the growth due to natural population increase rather than migration into the state.[7] During the next several decades, California's population is expected to increase about one percent annually—a rate that is only two-thirds of the state's rate of growth during the 1990s and just twenty-percent of the rate during the 1980s. High birth rates among the states Hispanic residents are the primary driver in the trend: by 2020, Hispanics are projected to be the state's largest ethnic group, with nearly 18 million Hispanics compared to 16 million whites.[8]

...Contrary to popular stereotypes about the freeway metropolis, the street is reclaiming its place at the center of a changing public life." Avila, 242

The demographic trends have implications for the built environment that are already in evidence in Los Angeles. The growth of the Latino community is breathing new life to the urban retail corridors of the city. As William Estrada writes,

> The Latinization of the city is bringing redemptive energy to its worn-out cores and inner suburbs and imprinting its own aesthetic sensibilities and cultural practices. This can be seen at all levels, from the spoken work to public art, from family-run shops along Broadway …to the reactivated front yards in residential areas from East Los Angeles. Thus, local spaces such as the Plaza continue to provide the emotional and symbolic basis for maintaining cultural identity.[9]

New forms of street life and sidewalk commerce, many which have their roots in South and Central American traditions, are becoming widely embraced as the city becomes a more diverse and multi-ethnic place. "*Vendedores* and *vendedoras* sell[ing] produce and flowers at freeway off-ramps and along median islands," a form of commerce and public interaction common in Latino neighborhoods, are spreading to more affluent neighborhoods, writes Eric Avilla.[10] Food trucks, which once catered primarily to Spanish-speaking laborers at construction

7 State of California, Department of Finance, "Population Projections by Race / Ethnicity, Gender and Age for California and Its Counties 2000–2050", July 2007, http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/p-3/.

8 Ibid.

9 Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 266.

10 Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight : Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 242.

sites, have become a major phenomenon and can now be found across the city catering to office workers as well. Along Wilshire Boulevard in the Miracle Mile district, one now finds dozens of food trucks selling everything from traditional Mexican fare to southern-style barbeque; some of the most popular food items combine elements of the city's diverse cultures, such as tacos filled with Korean beef. Today, some of the best culinary experiences in the city can be found along the parking lanes of its major arterials, challenging conventional wisdom about public space in Los Angeles as Angelenos of types take to sidewalks at lunchtime. As Los Angeles continues to become more racially diverse, multi-cultural public spaces, such as the Plaza, will become more important for the city.

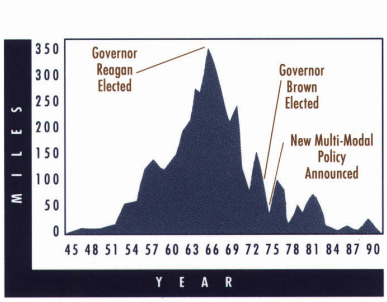
The most dramatic display of the city's reclamation of street life, began in 2010, with the temporary closure of 7.5 miles of downtown streets for an event known as CicLAvia, a new program designed to reintroduce public life to the city streets. Inspired by the weekly closure of certain streets to create bike routes of ciclovías in Bogotá, Colombia , CicLAvia applies the same idea to the streets of Los Angeles for several annual events. The most recent CicLAvia, which took place April 15, 2012, drew over one hundred thousand cyclists, skaters and pedestrians to ten miles of closed-to-traffic streets. The events are intended to bring the city's different communities together, and to showcase the alternative uses of space now dedicated to automobiles; however, it also challenges the conventional idea of L.A. as an auto-oriented metropolis that is more interested in mobility than public space. As Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said at the most recent event, "Angelenos are aching for a day without a car. CicLAvia provides us one of those days. But the change doesn't have to be temporary, so we are taking steps to make it easier for Angelenos to get from point A to point B — with or without a car."[11]

11 Ari Bloomekatz, "CicLAvia draws some 100,000 cyclists, skaters, pedestrians" *Los Angeles Times,* (April 16, 2012).

The End of Freeway Building

The Resurgence of Transit in Los Angeles

For much of the twentieth-century, transportation planners in Los Angeles and at Caltrans, focused on freeway building. The establishment of the Federal Highway Trust Fund in 1956 and the rapid growth of California in the post-war period, provided new sources of funding for highway construction. In 1959, California set out to build a freeway network nearly one-third the length of the entire planned-interstate highway system, adopting a highway plan that called for 12,241 miles of freeways across the state; however, by the 1970s funding for new highway projects had largely ran dry, as demand for road infrastructure and the cost of building it rapidly increased. In 1975, then-Governor Jerry Brown announced a new multi-modal policy, in which the state would promote transit and more-efficient use of existing highways, rather than the expansion of the freeway network, bringing transportation policy in line with fiscal realities. In Los Angeles, long-planned freeways, such as the Beverly Hills Freeway along Santa Monica Boulevard, which had been long-delayed by protests, were canceled. While freeway construction continued through the end of the twentieth century, just 7 percent of the remaining un-built freeway routes in the California Freeway System Plan in 1975 were constructed by 1990.[12]



Freeway Construction
Centerline miles of freeway constructed in California.
Graphic: Brian D. Taylor
Data: Caltrans Annual Reports

The saga of the Century Freeway, which opened in 1993 after ten years of construction, twenty years of litigation and over forty years of planning, illustrates why the era of freeway building is over in Los Angeles. Rising land acquisition and construction costs, combined with well-organized political opposition from neighborhood groups, are the main reasons why the Century Freeway took so long and cost so much to build, and why it is likely to be the last freeway built in Los Angeles. Built at a cost of $2.2 billion dollars (over $3.5 billion in current dollars), the 17.3 mile freeway was at the time the most expensive highway per mile ever built in the United States; however, construction costs accounted for only half of the total cost. On the other side of Los Angeles, in response opposition against a long-planned northern extension of the I-710 Long Beach Freeway

12 Brian D. Taylor, "Why California Stopped Building Freeways," *Access,* no. 3, (1993), 28-35.

to Pasadena, Caltrans is pursuing a below-ground alignment to avoid disturbing residential neighborhoods. The 4.5 freeway tunnel is projected to cost a minimum of $2.5 billion dollars, not including the cost of mitigation measures: nearly twice the per-mile cost of the Century Freeway. With strong opposition from cities along the alignment, rising construction costs and little appetite for new freeways among the region's political elite, its unlikely the 710 tunnel or any new freeway project, will see the light of day in Los Angeles.

In contrast, the expansion of the region's transit system has broad-based political support: over the past two decades the local transit agency, Metro, has built nearly 80 miles of rail transit lines and 70 stations. Subways now run under Hollywood and Wilshire Boulevards, while light-rail trains run along historic rail right-of-ways to Long Beach, Pasadena and soon Santa Monica. The business community, labor leaders, city officials and voters have all embraced an ambitious plan for subway and light-rail extension that is now underway. Elected in 2005, Villaraigosa is the city's first Hispanic mayor since 1872, and has been one of the most effective advocates for transit in the city's history. During his tenure, he championed a new sales tax, known as Measure R, which has helped fund over a dozen new transit projects since its passage in 2008; supported CicLAvia; and, recently announced a privately-funded $16-million bike-share program with the goal of putting 4,000 rental bicycles at 400 kiosks across Los Angeles. Since the passage of Measure R, two new light-rail lines have opened, expanding rail transit to East Los Angeles, and restoring rail transit to the Westside for the first time in over a half-century. On-going projects funding by Measure R will extend light-rail further into the San Gabriel Valley, create a new transit line through the historically-black Crenshaw District, extend light-rail to Santa Monica and complete the long-planned Wilshire Boulevard subway through the Miracle Mile, Beverly Hills and Century City to Westwood. The broad-based support for the measure, which was approved by a two-thirds majority, demonstrates a dramatic change from the auto-oriented city of the past; this shift is the third trend impacting the future of Downtown and Union Station.

Unlike the development of the freeway system, the growing transit network is making Downtown Los Angeles more accessible, and thus more central and more valuable. While the first freeways in Los Angeles were designed to connect Downtown to surrounding suburban population centers, such as Pasadena and Hollywood, forming a web of high-speed expressways with Downtown at the center; later freeways were developed as a grid, with Downtown becoming just one of many nodes. Thus, the freeway system supported decentralized development, with new commercial centers clustering around freeway interchanges. In contrast, the region's transit system has been developed like a wheel, with Downtown at the hub and spokes branching out in all directions. In this way, the subway, light-rail and commuter rail systems are substantively different from the bus network, which is designed as a grid following the city's major arterials. The design of the transit system now makes Downtown the focus of public investment in transportation, and private capital is already following. After nearly a half century of decentralization, the tide has turned.

These trends suggest a new type of city is emerging, one in which economic activity, transportation networks and the city's cultures converge in Downtown. However, unless the grid of freeways and arterial highways is removed, as was the network of streetcar lines, the suburban centers which have developed along it will not dry up, as did parts of Downtown. There is no evidence that future suburban Angelenos will be any more dependant on Downtown than they are today, when only about five percent of the county population travels to Downtown on any given day. Most Angelenos will continue to live, work and shop outside of the center city. Yet the Downtown is likely to become more important in the civic life and image of the city. Today tens of thousands of fans converge on the city center for basketball and hockey games, concerts and awards shows. In the future, tens of thousands more will be drawn by the planned football stadium known as Farmer's Field, with downtown bars and restaurants replacing parking lot tail gate parties as the pregame venue. Today, annual public events like CicLAvia, can draw up to a hundred thousand people to downtown on a single Sunday. In the future, the closure of Downtown streets may be a weekly occurrence,

drawing five million people per year to the city center. Today, 1.5 million passengers pass through Los Angeles Union Station on Amtrak each year.[13] In the future, between 30 and 70 million passengers may travel to or from the station on high-speed rail, with the trip to Downtown replacing the journey to LAX or one of the region's four other commercial airports for Angelenos.[14] Thus Downtown in the twenty-first century will resemble nether the monocentric model of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nor the decentralized model of second half of the 1900s. Instead, a new model is emerging: the convergent city. The city center won't be the place where most people commute to work everyday, but it will be the place where they come together for entertainment, culture and travel.

13 Amtrak "National Fact Sheet: FY 2010," 2010.

14 Parsons Brinckerhoff and Cambridge Systematics, "California High-Speed Train Project Ridership and Revenue Forecasts," n..d. http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/assets/0/152/198/224ab013-0771-4f9d-ae65-b667310e41d1.pdf

4

Case Studies

Lessons from London + New York

This chapter examines successful civic spaces networks in New York City and London, focusing on what makes them work.

London and New York City offer insights for Los Angeles, which can inform how transit stations, private development and public places function together as convergent spaces. Like Los Angeles, New York and London are major global cities, renowned as capitals of entertainment and culture; however, the three cities have significant differences when comparing density and transit access. Though the cities are similar in size, with between seven to nine million people, New York and London are significantly more dense.[1] Additionally, while all three developed extensive transit systems in the early twentieth century, only New York and London maintained and expanded their original systems whereas Los Angeles removed its streetcar network in the 1950s. While Los Angeles today may look more like the sprawling cities of Houston or Atlanta, the current and emerging trends suggest that in the twenty-first century Los Angeles will become more dense, more diverse and more transit-oriented, following a trajectory more like that of New York or London. Though Southern California cannot be expected to be transformed into a model of either of those metropolises, their centers can inform how Downtown Los Angeles may evolve.

1 An exact size comparison is difficult, given the different organizational structures of the three cities. New York City, which spans five counties, has a population of 8.2 million people; Greater London, has a population of 7.7 million; Los Angeles County has a population of about 9 million people.

New York City

Midtown Manhattan- 42nd Street Corridor

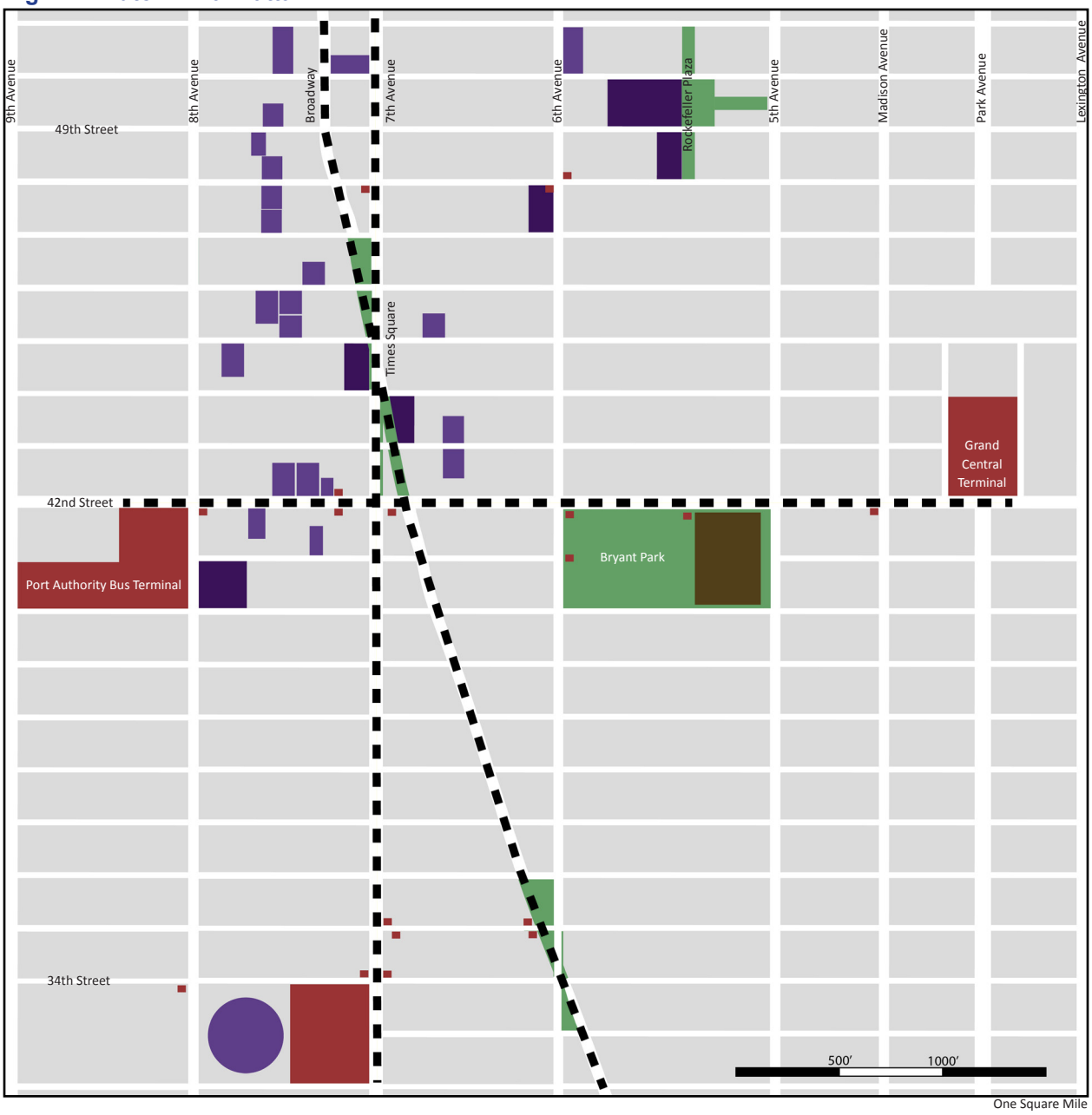
With a population of over eight million people, New York City is the nation's largest. Its subway system carries over five million passengers per day, and its dense urban center boasts some of the world's most valuable real estate. From most outward appearances the city seems to have followed the opposite path of Los Angeles, which grew outward in the twentieth century, with development following new freeway corridors. However, New York City did experience some of the ravages of the same trends which transformed Los Angeles. Over the course of the twentieth century, the city decentralized; in 1900, over half of New York City residents lived in Manhattan, by 1980 only a fifth did. The availability of cheap land outside the urban center on Long Island and in New Jersey, lead to the rapid rise of suburban communities beginning in the 1920s and accelerating in the post-war period. Under the leadership of Robert Moses, 627 miles of highways were built in and around New York City, facilitating decentralized development and auto use.

Times Square in Decline
Shuttered theatres along 42nd Street in 1983. *James Lileks*

The effects of those trends which completely transformed Los Angeles were less pronounced in New York because the city is much more geographically constrained and highway-building programs were never fully embraced. Plans for elevated highway across Lower and Midtown Manhattan were abandoned in the face of community opposition. While elevated railways were removed, the majority of the subway system remained in place. However, the city did suffer a period of decline in the 1970s, as firms and people left Manhattan for suburban locations, public infrastructure fell into disrepair and crime became a growing problem in the urban core. From 1970 to 1980, the city lost over 800,000 residents, while the city government teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. In recent decades the city has rebounded, remaking the formerly neglected places of Times Square, Bryant Park and Grand Central Terminal into popular destinations that have led to substantial new investment in Midtown Manhattan. Their transformation offers lessons for Los Angeles.[2]

2 Matthew Carmona, Claudio de Maglhaes and Leo Hammond, *Public Space: The Management Dimension,* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 159-163.

Fig. 4-1 Midtown Manhattan



- TRANSIT
- MEDIA
- PREFORMING ARTS (THEATRES)
- CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS (MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES
- OPEN SPACE

Public Spaces

There are four main civic spaces in Midtown Manhattan, which are oriented along 42nd Street, Seventh and Fifth Avenues:

Grand Central Terminal
The Main Concourse is an iconic public space. *Gregory Bull / AP*

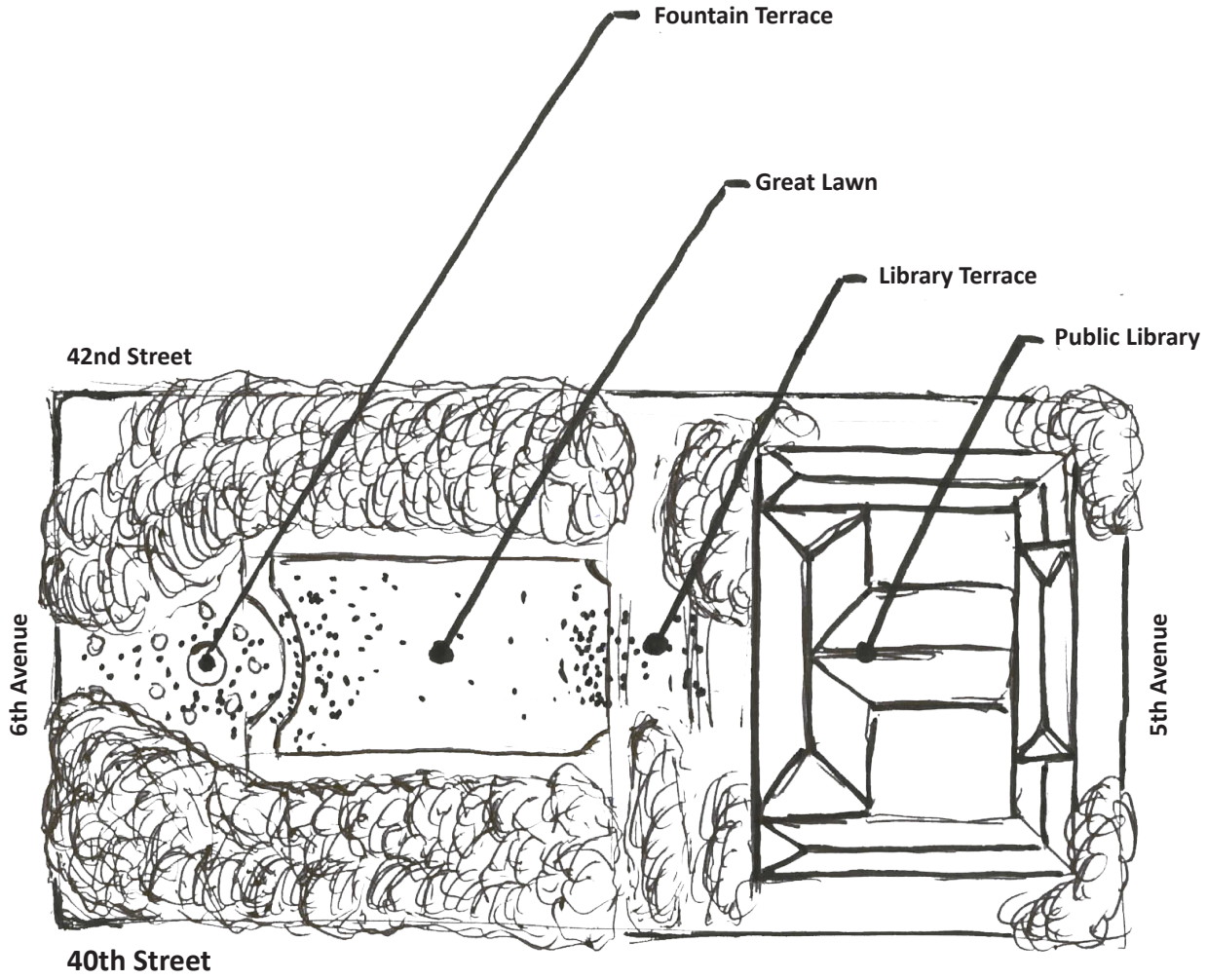
Grand Central Terminal. Built between 1903 and 1913 by the privately-owned New York Central Railroad, today the station is controlled by the public Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and serves as the Manhattan terminus for the MTA's MetroNorth commuter rail service. With 44 platforms accessing 67 tracks, it is the largest rail station in the world by number of platforms. It is the second busiest rail station in the United States, with over 750,000 passengers traveling through the station each day.[3] At the heart of the station is the soaring Main Concourse, which functions like an indoor public plaza. Recently, new retailers, including Apple, have opened on the mezzanine above the concourse, while the level below has always featured a collection of popular restaurants.

Bryant Park
The revitalized park is one of Midtown's most -used public spaces.
Bryant Park Corporation

Bryant Park. Designated for public use since 1686, the rectangular public park boarded by 40th and 42nd Streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues has been the location the main branch of the New York Public Library since 1911. For almost two-decades in the early twentieth century the park was impacted by subway construction. It reopened in 1934 with a new, formal design featuring a large central lawn anchored by the neo-classical library facade and terrace at the east end; a plaza and fountain at the west end; and flanked by allées of London Plane trees on either side. These design elements remain today, although the park has been altered to allow better visibility and access from the surrounding sidewalks. These design changes, and the introduction of commercial activity in the form of small cafes during the summer and a large temporary bar and restaurant during the winter, have helped revive the park which was once overrun with drug dealers. Since 1988, the park has been operated by the non-profit Bryant Park Corporation (BPC), which oversaw the redesign of the park and is responsible for maintaining the park today.

3 "Demographics," Grand Central Terminal, http://www.grandcentralterminal.com/info/demographics.cfm (accessed May 12, 2012).

Fig. 4-2 Bryant Park



Times Square. Named for the *New York Times,* which located its headquarters there in 1904 and still operates in the district, Times Square has become a center for media and entertainment. Today the district is home to ABC's Times Square Studios, magazine publisher Conde Nast, media conglomerate Viacom, the Nasdaq MarketSite broadcast center and over twenty live theatres. In 2009, Broadway was closed to traffic between 42nd and 47th Streets through the district, creating a series of pedestrian plazas.

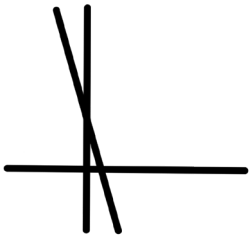
Times Square
Formed by the intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue, Times Square is a major crossroads which has developed into the center of the city's media and entertainment industries.
Author Photo, 2011

Rockefeller Center
A sunken plaza and pedestrianized street are at the center of the Rockefeller complex.
Author Photo, 2012

Rockefeller Center. Developed in 1939, Rockefeller Plaza is a privately-owned publicly accessible outdoor space at the center of the Rockefeller Center complex. Rockefeller Center is home to the headquarters of the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), which broadcasts several programs live from the complex, including *The NBC Nightly News*, *Saturday Night Live!*, and *The Today Show,* whose street-level studio attracts crowds of onlookers to the Plaza. These shows, as well as the fictional *30 Rock*, which is set at the complex, have helped make Rockefeller Center an instantly recognizable icon. The public spaces of the complex include, the three-block long, street-level Rockefeller Plaza; the sunken plaza, known for its seasonal ice-skating rink; and the Channel Gardens, which link the Plaza with Fifth Ave.

What Makes it Work

Transit Access. Times Square sits atop the city's busiest subway station, where five lines with eleven services converge. The square itself is formed by the intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue, an interruption in the city's grid that naturally makes it a place where paths cross and people come together. Four blocks over, Grand Central Terminal is the city's most famous and second busiest railway station, which serves as the gateway to Midtown for thousands of commuters from north of the city. In between, Bryant Park is served by two subway stations, making 42nd Street one of the most-transit accessible places in the world.



Street Connections. The public space network of Midtown Manhattan is organized by the city's street pattern. East-west 42nd Street forms an axis anchored by the Grand Central Terminal on the east and the Port Authority Bus Terminal on the west, with Bryant Park and Times Square in between. Broadway and Seventh Avenue are intersecting north-south axes, which connect to Pennsylvania Station and Herald Square to the south and Central Park to the north.

Management and Amenities. Not long ago, 42nd Street and Bryant Park in particular, were seedy, dangerous places that many avoided. Today, thanks to active management by no-fewer than three separate organizations established to maintain and protect

these spaces (Times Square Alliance, Bryant Park Restoration Corporation and Grand Central Partnership), Times Square and Bryant Park have again become extremely popular destinations. Numerous amenities, from simple folding chairs, to pop-up restaurants, an outdoor reading room and a seasonal ice-skating rink attract people to these places day and night, year-round.

Key Design Elements

Expanded Space for Pedestrians. Street closures along Broadway through Times Square and on Park Avenue near Grand Central, have extended the pedestrian realm, created spaces for people to gather, while partial street closures along Broadway between Times and Herald Squares provide link between those two spaces.

Restaurants and Cafes. From sidewalk hot-dog vendors to high-end restaurants, the dining options in these public spaces are a major attraction. For example, Bryant Park features five small cafe kiosks around the fountain plaza at the west end of the park and two larger restaurants on the library terrace at the east end, providing a range of options.

Lots of flexible seating. The moveable folding chairs not only invite people to make the space their own by choosing where to sit, but the fact that they are not bolted down suggests that this is not a place where security is a concern—someone is responsible for them and the space.

Connections to sidewalks. Bryant Park is elevated from the street level, which sets it apart from the hustle and bustle of the sidewalk, making it a refuge from the city, but also contributed to its security issues in the 1970s. The new design, with wider entrances and the removal of vegetation around the park make it inviting and easy to watch, increasing security.

Seasonal Events. Bryant Park, Times Square and Rockefeller Plaza are all famous for their seasonal transformations. Since 1936, Rockefeller Plaza has hosted an outdoor ice skating rink and a live Christmas tree. They act as an anchor, drawing millions

Broadway
Broadway, between 42nd and 34th Streets is partially closed to traffic creating a pedestrian plaza and protected bike lane. *Author Photo, 2012*

Bryant Park
Small cafes located within the park serve as anchors activating the space.
Author photo, 2012

Rockafeller Plaza
The plaza's ice skating rink and Christmas tree are city landmarks, which contribute to the imageabilty of the place. *Author photo, 2012*

of visitors to the plaza during the winter months. Together they have become symbols of the complex and of New York City through their representation in the media. Between 1994 and 2010, Bryant Park has hosted New York's Fashion Week, bringing international attention to the space; however, the event required the closure of the park to the general public, which became a source of contention leading to the discontinuance of the park as the event's location.[4]

What Could be Better

Lack of Authenticity. Since its transformation, Times Square has become a place that many New Yorkers avoid for a new reason: it's too touristy. The theme restaurants and chain eateries that have sprouted to serve the tourist market have made the Crossroads of the World into anyplace, USA. While establishments like Ripley's Believe It or Not! and Chili's may draw in the crowds, they offer little of interest for locals and detract from this only-in-New York experience for out-of-towners.

Connectivity. While Bryant Park is only 1,200 to 1,500 feet from Times Square or Grand Central, roughly the same length as the pedestrianized section of Broadway between 42nd and 47th streets, the three attractions still seem like three separate places, rather than three parts of a greater whole. Improvements along 42nd Street, such as the proposed streetcar could address this issue, and transform these three places into one of the world's single greatest urban spaces.

Visibility of Grand Central. As one of New York's most famous buildings, Grand Central is a must for most tourists, and while the interior space impresses the exterior disappoints when viewed from 42nd Street. The building is not only dwarfed by neighboring structures, but its front façade is nearly impossible to enjoy from the street. Open space in front of the building would give people the opportunity to appreciate this masterpiece of architecture.

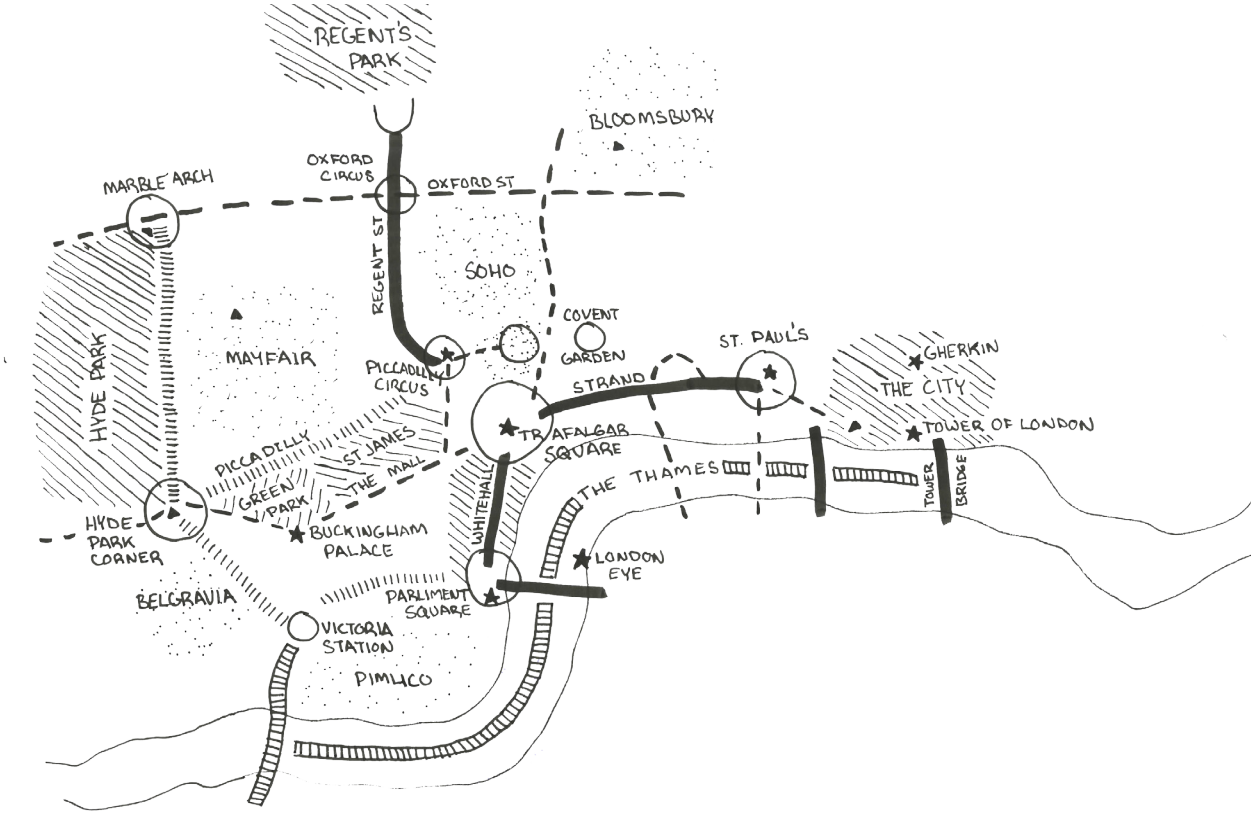
4 Eric Wilson. "A New Home for New York Fashion Week." *New York Times*. February 2, 2009.

London

Heart of London-Charring Cross

The largest city in the European Union, by most measures, and the largest city in the world for nearly a century, from 1831 to 1925, with a population of 7.8 million London rivals New York City in size and stature. With the world's oldest, and second most extensive, subway system, London is a model for transportation planning. Much of the city retains its medieval street pattern making London extremely walkable, while former royal land holdings have been opened to the public creating a network of public spaces across the city. However, as was the case in New York, many of its public spaces fell into disrepair in the second half of the twentieth century. Leicester Square became the posterchild for this decline; already a viewed as a dangerous place, like New York's Bryant Park in the 1970s, it sunk to new lows during the winter of 1979 when it was used as an overflow dump during a prolonged garbage strike. Since then, Leicester Square has rebounded, becoming again the center of the city's entertainment district along. As in New York,

Fig. 4-3 The Image of London



the creation Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) was central to this transformation. Today the Heart of London BID, which oversees Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus is active in the management of those spaces. As part of the changes, the spaces were redesigned with increased space for pedestrians. In 2003, Trafalgar Square underwent a similar transformation, when the north edge of the square was closed to traffic, creating a broad new public space linking the square with the National Gallery to the north.[5]

Public Spaces

There are four main civic spaces in the central London, which are linked by pedestrian streets:

Trafalgar Square
View of Trafalgar Square from the steps of the National Gallery.
Rick Wianecki, National Geographic

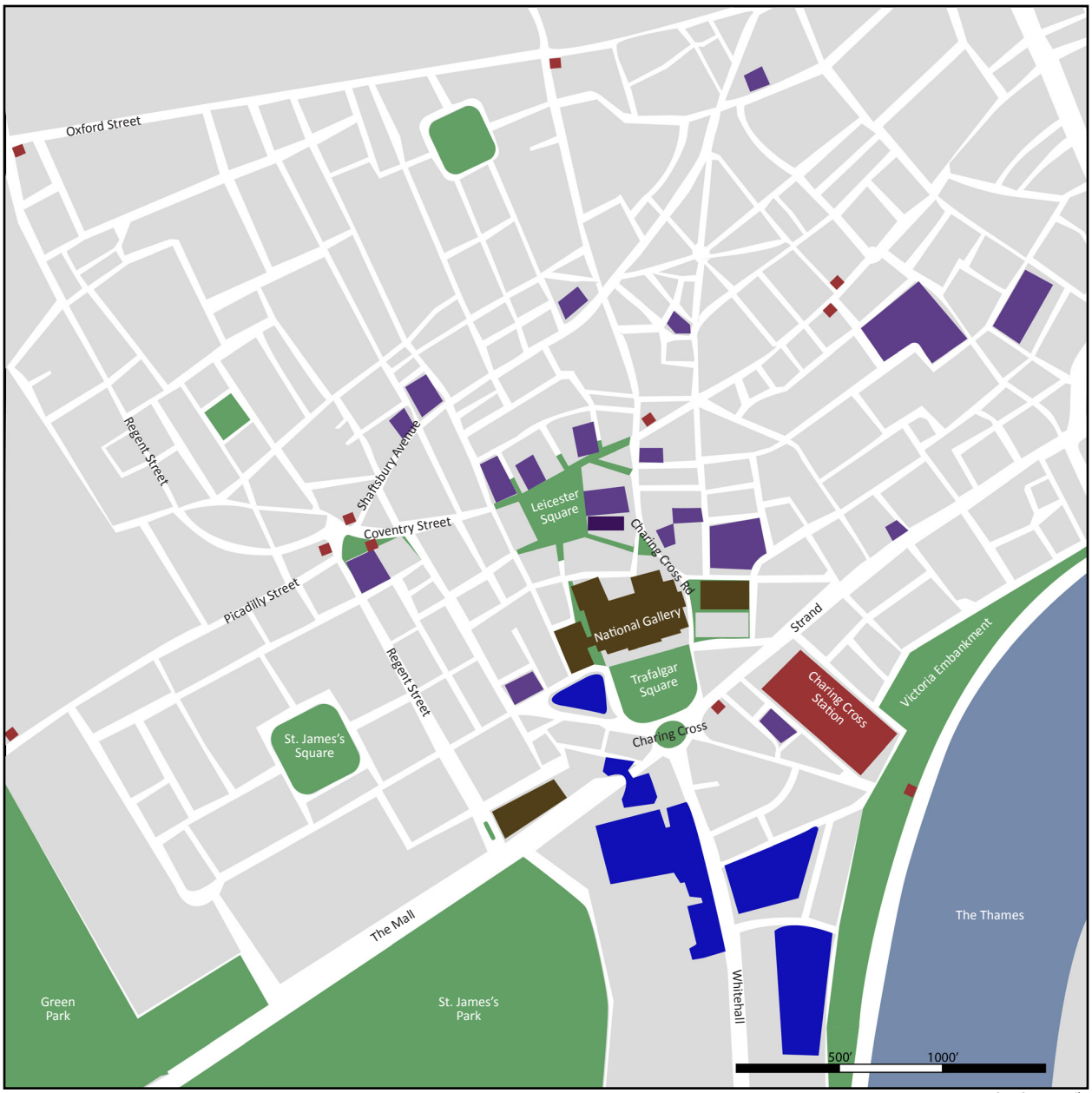
Trafalgar Square. The first purpose-built public square in central London when it was designed and built in the first half of the nineteenth century, Trafalgar Square has become the central civic space of Britain's capital. First proposed as a civic space by architect John Nash in 1812, its design and construction was overseen by Sir Charles Barry. Following Nash's recommendation that a cultural institution be located along the north edge of the square, Berry located National Gallery along an upper terrace and created the lower level square, anchored by two fountains below.[6]

The use and design of the square has been a point of contention since its creation. While it was originally conceived of as a cultural space, it quickly became dominated by military monuments. The most prominent, the 169-foot tall memorial to Admiral Horatio Nelson, was opposed by Barry, who felt it was out of scale with the space; however, it has since become the defining symbol of the space. The four plinths, planned by Barry for the display of art, were given over to other military monuments; however, in recent years the fourth plinth, which had remained empty, has been used for rotating art installations that have sometimes themselves been the subject of controversy.

The square has a long history as a place of political assembly and

5 Greater London Authority. "Trafalgar Square – A brief history," lodnon.gov.uk (accessed May 14, 2012).
6 Ibid; Carmona, de Maglhaes and Hammond, 30-31.

Fig. 4-4 Central London



- TRANSIT
- GOVERNMENT OFFICE
- MEDIA
- PREFORMING ARTS (THEATRES)
- CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS (MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES
- OPEN SPACE

protest, dating back to the nineteenth century. The square was seen as the symbolic intersection of the working class East End and upper class West End of London, and thus became the site of class struggles. Assemblies were initially banned in the square, though this prohibition was later relaxed. The events of Bloody Sunday in 1887 led to Parliamentary debate over the nature of the space, which is public in part but owned by the sovereign.

While the space continued to be a site of demonstrations during the twentieth century, its scale and location surrounded by heavy traffic made it inhospitable for everyday use. In part this is also an unintended consequence of Nash's strict rules to prevent the commercialization of the space, which prohibited vending unlike other London squares, which were the sites of markets or other commercial activities that attracted crowds. This ban has been relaxed in recent years, with the addition of a cafe on the square itself. Along with the closure of traffic lanes along the north edge of the square in 2003, this move has helped Trafalgar Square become a more vibrant space in the twenty-first century.

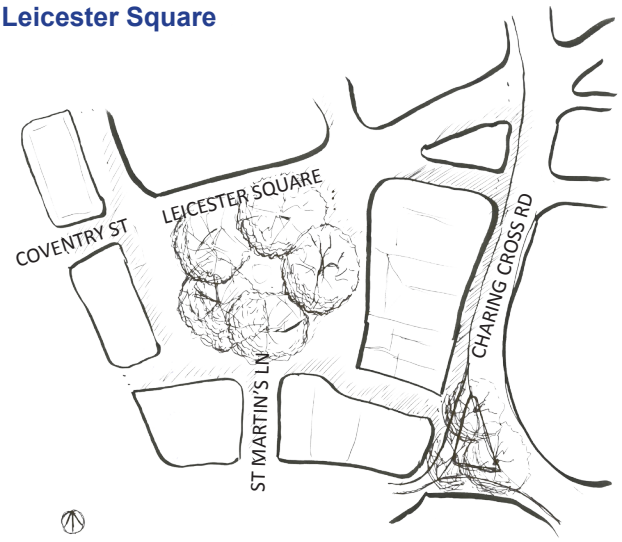
Charing Cross Station
PhotographLondon

Charing Cross. Immediately south of Trafalgar Square is Charing Cross, which predates the square by approximately six centuries. Originally the site of the Eleanor Cross, erected in 1291–94 by King Edward I as a memorial to his wife, it marked the center of the ancient hamlet of Charing. Today a statue of Charles I stands on the site, which is now a traffic circle. It remains the official center of the London and the point from which all distances to the city are measured; however, the space's function as a landmark has been largely subsumed by Trafalgar Square with its much more visible Nelson's Column. In 1865, a recreation of the cross was built to the east; commissioned by the South Eastern Railway as a landmark for the then-new Charing Cross Station. The Charing Cross Hotel, designed by Edward Middleton Barry and built over the entrance of the station fronting the Strand, gave the station a grand facade. In the 1980s, the Embankment Place office building was constructed over the station platforms, replacing most the original, Victorian-era roof, though a section remains over the expanded shopping and waiting area.

Leicester Square. Like many of London's garden squares, Leicester Square was originally created to anchor the fashionable residential district that developed around it. As formerly common land of the St. Martin in the Fields parish, the Earl of Leicester, who developed the area in 1635, was required by Charles I to preserve public access to the four-acre site that became Leicester Square. Perhaps because of this, by the late eighteenth century the square was no longer a desirable location for the city's aristocracy, which moved further west to the newer squares of Mayfair, St. James's and Belgravia. Leicester Square, with its more centrally accessible location, became the site of popular entertainment venues- a characteristic which continues to define the square to this day. Leicester Square is notable for the concentration of theatres and cinemas surrounding it, and it has recently become a popular location for British movie premieres. The design of the square itself reinforces this connection to the dramatic arts: the park is anchored by a statue of Shakespeare at its center, along with representations of the first President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Charlie Chaplin, while the ground is embellished with the names and cast handprints of film stars. The city's official half-price theatre ticket booth is also located here. Since the 1980s, the streets immediately surrounding the square's central park have been closed to most auto traffic, creating one of London's largest pedestrian districts.

Leicester Square
Green lawns and trees provide place to observe the city, and frame the monument to Shakespeare, which stands in the center of the square. *Tonestar, TravelPod*

Fig. 4-5 Leicester Square



Piccadilly Circus
The Shaftsbury Memorial, lower left, and electronic signage are the two defining elements of the space.
Encyclopedia Britannica

Piccadilly Circus. Created in 1819 to connect then-new Regent Street with the existing shopping district along Piccadilly Street, Piccadilly Circus is a major crossroads in the West End of London. Six streets now converge at this point, including Shaftsbury Avenue to the north-west, Coventry Street to the east, and the aforementioned Piccadilly and Regent Streets. It sits above the Piccadilly Underground Station, where the Piccadilly and Victoria Lines cross. Anchoring the space is the landmark Shaftsbury Memorial, best known for the statue of Eros atop it. Originally located in the center of the intersection, it was moved to the southern edge of the space in the 1980s, where it now anchors a small public plaza.

What Makes it Work

Transit Access. Like Midtown, Central London has ubiquitous transit access. At Trafalgar Square, Charring Cross Station, provides inter-city rail service for over 36.4 million passengers annually while the adjoining Underground station by the same name brings an additional 21.39 million people to the site. At the other end of the axis Piccadilly Station serves 39.7 million passengers annually.

Leicester Square Pedestrian Zone
In the morning, delivery vehicles are permitted in the pedestrian zone, while in the afternoon the electronic bollards in the foreground rise, restricting auto access.
Google Streetview, 2008

Management and Amenities. Both Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square, as well as the surrounding streets, are managed by the Heart of London BID, including cleaning, maintaining and marketing the spaces. In all four spaces a mix of amenities from tourist information to cafes and retail, create a vibrant, safe and welcoming environment for visitors.

Pedestrian Connections. Central London's small-public spaces function as a single network thanks to pedestrian connections between them.

Leicester Square Pedestrian Zone. The streets surrounding Leicester Square are closed to vehicular traffic (except for deliveries which are permitted between 7am and noon, Monday through Saturday), but have not been converted to green space. The result serves the high volume of pedestrian traffic and provides ample space for street performers that

Charing Cross Station

Key	Food and Drink	Shopping
Accessible toilets	01. Boadicea (pub)	10. Boots
Baby change	18. Bonapartes	17. Classi Clean
Bike ark	02. Burger King	14. Journey's Friend
Buses	03. Caffè Nero	08. Perfect Presents
Cash point	24. Camden Food Co.	16. Photo-Me
Escalators	15. Costa Coffee	07. Tie Rack
First aid	05. Cranberry	06. Vodafone
Information	23. Delice de France	20. WHSmith Stationery
Left luggage	13. M&S Simply Food	21. WHSmith
Platform numbers	11. Millie's Cookies	09. Vacant
Stairs	22. Paul	
Station reception	04. Pasty Shop	
Taxis	19. Upper Crust	
Telephones	12. Whistlestop	
Tickets		
Toilets		
Underground		

© Network Rail

add to the area's character as an entertainment district, while maintaining the urban character and traditional street pattern. Electronic bollards regulate vehicular access.

Coventry Street. Three-block long Coventry Street connects Leicester Square with Piccadilly Circus to the west.

Charing Cross Road. This major north-south arterial links Leicester Square with Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross Station. Its gentle curve slows traffic and provides views of St. Martin's

St. Martin's Street. This narrow two-block passage provides a second link between Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square. The only street to meet the center of Leicester Square rather than the edge, the greenery of the Square forms a terminating vista when walking north. The curb-less paving blurs the division between the pedestrian realm and vehicle lane, while trees planted in the parking lane prevent it from becoming a second travel lane. Trees are also used along the street to illustrate the link, and negotiate a jog in the street: a single row of trees lines the east side of the street giving way to a small open space with a double row of trees where pedestrians must shift to the east to connect to Trafalgar Square.

Key Design Elements

Pedestrian-priority Streets. Pedestrian connections link the three public spaces. While each is unique they have several shared design elements, as illustrated in Figures 4-6 and 4-7:

A. Views to iconic landmarks in each public space. The leafy trees of Leicester Square make it stand out against the grey London landscape at the north end of St. Martin's Lane and at the east end of Coventry Street. In the opposite direction, the famous Eros Statute is visible marking the location of Piccadilly Circus. Where views are obstructed, as is the case along St. Martin's Lane looking south towards Trafalgar Square, large signage announcing the National Gallery serves as the landmark.

B. Widened sidewalks. Widened sidewalks extend the character of public plazas along surrounding streets and differentiate those streets which serve to connect civic spaces. Functionally, they accommodate the higher volumes of pedestrian traffic as well as allowing sidewalk cafes and other commercial activity.

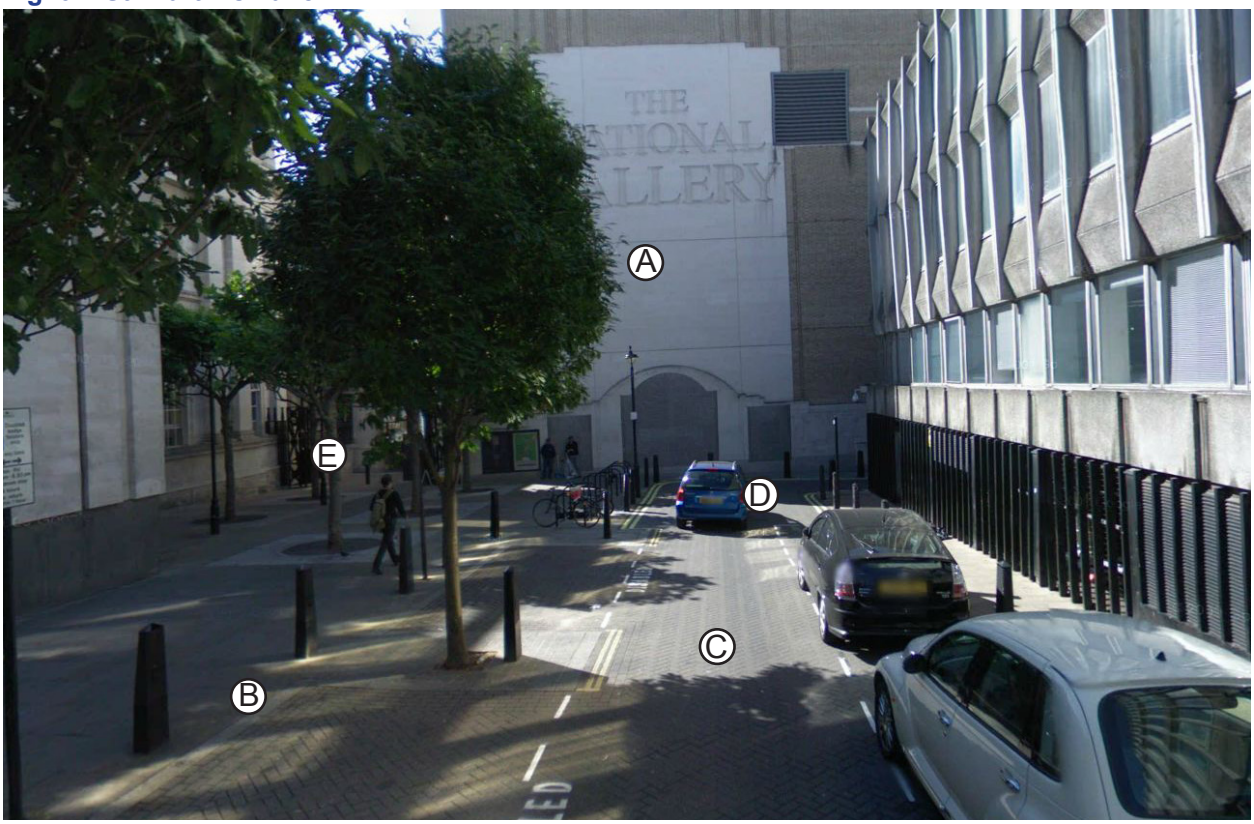
C. Narrow Traffic Lanes. Traffic along those streets which are pedestrian connections is generally restricted to one narrow lane, which slows vehicle speeds and makes it safer for pedestrians to cross, as they need only watch for traffic from one direction.

D. Forced vehicle turns. Both Coventry Street and St. Martin's Lane force vehicles to turn before reaching the key public spaces, while pedestrians and cyclists are allowed to continue straight. This discourages through traffic from using these streets while preserving local access.

E. Repeated design elements. Repeated design elements, like trees along Charing Cross Road or St. Martin's Lane, provide continuity and demarcate the pedestrian routes.

Fig. 4-6 Coventry Street

Fig. 6-7 St. Martin's Lane



What could be better

Charing Cross Station. With the high quality of public spaces, high-density of cultural and historic landmarks, Charing Cross Station is something of an afterthought. In part this is due to the decentralized nature of London's National Rail stations; unlike most American cities where private railroads were forced to consolidate services in central union stations, London maintains eighteen separate stations, with each serving lines from different parts of the country. While Charing Cross is the fifth busiest by passenger volume, it is a second-tier station compared to those with airport or international service. Charing Cross is also disconnected from the urban fabric because of the auto-oriented parking and loading area in front of the station. Closing the area to vehicles and creating a pedestrianized plaza in front of the station would enhance the visibility of the station and be a more fitting entrance to the Heart of London.

5

Design Principles
The Elements of Convergent Spaces

Drawing from the examples of the case studies, this chapter identifies five major elements that contribute to their success and outlines design strategies and principles.

Convergent city spaces are places of coming together, both physically and metaphorically. They are both gateways and destinations, serving tourists and residents. As the case studies of New York and London illustrate, these spaces are both enduring and evolving, and while each is unique, there are commonalities between them which help explain their success, and can inform the development of Downtown Los Angeles in the twenty-first century.

Convergent city spaces are characterized by five key elements:

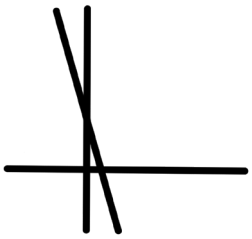
1. **Connectivity**—networked public places
2. **Vibrancy**—diverse and unique uses and attractions
3. **Authenticity**—cultivated, not manufactured, spaces
4. **Imageability**—memorable and iconic places
5. **Flexibility**—customizable, event spaces

While each of these elements are individually important, their true value is in how they work in concert, supporting and reinforcing each other. For example, connectivity contributes to vibrancy by facilitating the movement of people through the spaces of the public realm, giving life to streets and sidewalks. Vibrancy adds to the authenticity of a place, as people use, adapt and change the space to suit their particular needs. The unique,

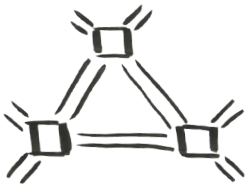
authentic elements of the urban landscape, become landmarks that help create the image of the city, and imageability enhances connectivity. The individual elements of imageability such as paths or landmarks, create physical and visual connections, and the more imageable, or legible, a city is the more easily connections can be recognized and formed.

These elements are not a checklist or recipe for creating public spaces, but they can provide a useful framework for thinking about the issues of access, land use, historic preservation, identity, and social interaction.

1. Connectivity



Connectivity is the essential element of convergent spaces. It's no coincidence that Times Square sits atop New York's busiest and most connected subway station where four lines with a total of eleven different services intersect. It became 'crossroads of the world' because it is a major crossroads of the city's street and transit networks. The intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue developed into major public space and entertainment district because it was one of the most accessible places in the city.



Convergent spaces feature clusters of inter-connected public spaces. Public space in these areas functions like a network: following Metcalfe's law, its value is increased exponentially with the addition of each new piece. An isolated public space, no mater how well designed, cannot create the vibrancy of an urban center: that requires connections to other spaces, attractions and destinations. Two closely-spaced public places will more activity than they would if located further apart, because people can move between them.

Projects that ignore this element ultimately fail. Where projects are designed to block out or be disconnected from adjacent areas that are perceived as dangerous or undesirable, they either ensure the continued decline of those areas or they loose out on potential opportunities if those areas rebound. For many years the fortress-like eastern edge of the Bunker Hill

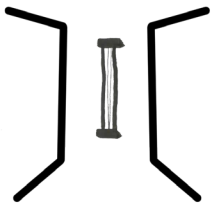
redevelopment project in Downtown Los Angeles prevented the historic core east of Hill Street from capitalizing on the economic activity occurring in the redeveloped area; however, in the recent decade the historic core has experienced a renaissance, with a flourishing of new restaurants and art galleries, and now Bunker Hill is isolated from this popular neighborhood. Projects which open up and connect to surrounding areas can spur new growth and activity in formerly-depressed areas, creating both public benefits and increased value for the initial project; however, those which do the opposite can create divisions within a city that persist for decades, entrenching and exacerbating existing problems.

Design Principles

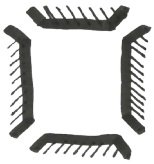
1. **Prioritize transit access and connections** between different modes, and facilitate transit connections to nearby public spaces. The challenge for Los Angeles Union Station will be to integrate subway, light-rail, bus, commuter rail and high-speed rail, and to accommodate the needs of both commuters and visitors.

2. **Extend the pedestrian character** of parks or plazas along the streets that lead to them. This may be done with streets that are at least partiality closed to traffic, like those around Leicester Square, or by taking elements of the central public space and extending them along an adjacent low traffic street, as was done with the redesign of 41st Street as 'Library Way' or Broadway between 42nd Street and Hearld Square.

3. **Preserve and create visual connections**. Visual connections aid with wayfinding and make disparate public spaces feel connected. For example, Coventry Street, which links Picadilly Circus and Leicester Square, feels connected to both in part because both the landmark Eros Statue of the former and the leafy trees of the latter are visible at each end of the street.



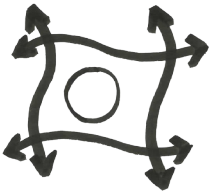
2. Vibrancy



Convergent spaces are places of concentrated activity. They are enlivened by movement, commerce and culture. Many are partially open to auto traffic, which contributes to the noise and bustle that makes these spaces distinctly urban, but they are not designed to maximize vehicle throughput. In general, at least half the space is reserved for pedestrians, which comprise the majority of street users in these areas. They are necessarily congested, but the best public spaces offer places of respite as well, from which it is possible to observe the movement around one.

Commercial activity and cultural uses are essential in creating vibrant public spaces. Uses that attract people throughout the day, such as retail or restaurants, create vibrancy; uses that have limited hours, or draw few people, such as banks, government offices or other business services, kill street life because they are generally dark and closed after 5pm and on weekends. Entertainment uses, such as theatres, which attract people in the evening and on weekends, can be major draws and support surrounding retail and restaurant uses which might otherwise close during those times. Cultural institutions, such as libraries, museums or theatres, can also serve as attractions. Incorporating commercial uses into public spaces, such as the cafe kiosks in Bryant Park, draws people into those places and can provide a sense of security. Partnering with commercial uses can also provide a source of revenue for maintaining and enhancing public spaces.

Design Principles:



4. **Balance movement and statsis**, providing space for both auto and pedestrian access, as well as places for people to stop and gather.

5. **Narrow streets**, restricting both the number of travel lanes and the total width of space between building faces. Narrowing the width of streets concentrates activity creating a sense of vibrancy. Along pedestrian priority streets, auto

access should be restricted to a single lane, facilitating easy pedestrian crossings at any point along the street.

6. **Create inviting public buildings**. Cultural institutions attract people from across the city or region. Public buildings should be highly visible with entrances facing public spaces. The broad front steps of the New York Public Library in Bryant Park and National Gallery on Trafalgar Square, invite people to gather and draw people into those cultural institutions.

New York Public Library Steps
The Library's entrance steps provide a place to watch the movement along Fifth Avenue.
Donald Peterson

3. Authenticity

Convergent spaces aren't manufactured: they're cultivated. Convergent spaces develop organically over a long period of time, with planning and design regulations in place to enhance the distinctive features of the place. For example, Times Square developed as an entertainment district in the early twentieth century, while the first electric sign was installed in 1904. Since then those elements, which became the defining characteristics of the district, have been incorporated into the zoning regulations for the area: city regulations now require illuminated signage on buildings fronting Times Square, while a density bonus encourages new buildings to include theatres.

Successful public spaces change and adapt over time, but maintain their defining elements. In order to create vibrancy and accommodate new and changing uses, regulations should be flexible enough to allow innovative new development, balancing growth and preservation. Many of the design elements of Bryant Park or Times Square are less than ten years old, but their basic forms, landmarks, and defining characteristics, like the electronic billboards of Times Square or the London Plane trees and library façade of Bryant Park, remain unchanged.

Design Principles

7. **Start with the history of the site**, and build on what makes the site unique. Union Station is adjacent to the historic heart

of Los Angeles, which provides a starting point for thinking about its future.

8. **Draw on historic patterns** but do not attempt to replicate the past. Places must be allowed to adapt to the changing needs of the city, while preserving the defining characteristics of the space. The challenge for Union Station is to accommodate high-speed rail and new real estate development while respecting the historic character of the existing station building and adjacent plaza areas.

4. Imageability

Civic spaces are an essential part of the image of a city; successful ones have what urbanist Kevin Lynch called *imageability*, "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer."[1] Times Square, Rockefeller Center, Trafalger Square and Picadilly Circus all excel in this area: the mere mention of their names instantly brings to mind their images, and the cities which they symbolize. In advertising, this concept is known as brand recognition, and it is a tremendous source of value for those products or places that have it; office space at Rockefeller Center commands a premium, because of its iconic status. However, the importance of imageability goes beyond monetary value.

"Historically, squares were the center of communities, and they traditionally helped shape the identity of entire cities... The image of many squares was closely tied to the great civic buildings located nearby, such as cathedrals, city halls, or libraries. Today, creating a square that becomes the most significant place in a city–that gives identity to whole communities–is a huge challenge, but meeting this challenge is absolutely necessary if great civic squares are to return." –Project for Public Spaces

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Imageability contributes to the legibility of the urban form, which Lynch defines as "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern." Legibility contributes to the connectivity of urban places, those areas which are highly legible--where people have a clear mental

1 Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 47.

image of how the parts are connected--seem highly connected because the paths that connect them are clear and memorable. For instance, Grand Central Terminal has a clear and legible relationship with Park Avenue: the extra-wide avenue which was created to accommodate the station's tracks now serves to focus attention on the station and adjoining development. In contrast, its relationship with 42nd Street is unclear. Times Square, Bryant Park and Grand Central Terminal seem like three separate places, though they are only a few blocks apart, because 42nd Street which connects them is not highly legible.

In addition to the five elements that Lynch identified, media representations of urban places contribute to the imageability of cities. Media centers, such as television or radio studios are facilities which broadcast the image of the city to a regional or national audience, and thus provide another way in which the city is observed. Those which strongly identify with the place, such as NBC's street-level *Today Show* studio in Rockefeller Center, ABC's Times Square Studios, and MTV's former studios in Times Square and Leicester Square, have a powerful influence in creating the image of the city.

Iconic Streets
With its consistent design pattern and terminating vistas, Park Avenue (above) is highly-legible, while the less imageable 42nd Street (below) is not. This is in part because none of the many landmark buildings located along the street are visible at street level from a distance.

In this view of 42nd Street, looking east from Madison Avenue, neither Grand Central Terminal (one block away) nor the Chrysler Building (two blocks away) are visible. *Lorenzo Gianotti*

Design Principles

9. **Establish clear paths**—linear spaces, such as streets, walkways or transit lines—between the transit station, public spaces and surrounding districts.

10. **Preserve views to existing landmarks**, and create new landmarks to identify major nodes and enhance the visibility of the spaces.

11. **Develop the station area as a district**, with a unique and distinct identities.

12. **Incorporate the virtual public forum into the physical one**, by co-locating media centers and civic spaces.

5. Flexibility

Civic spaces are flexible, accommodating change in real time. Both New York's and London's civic spaces are flexible in multiple dimensions. Some spaces, such as Bryant Park and Times Square, are customizable by individual users; their moveable chairs allow individuals to adjust seating configurations to their preferences. Others, like the steps of the Public Library, National Gallery or Shaftsbury Memorial, are flexible by accommodating multiple uses without changing: the open design of those elements allows them to accommodate individuals or couples as comfortably as large groups, such as a class of schoolchildren.

Pershing Square Plaza
The temporary closure of Park Avenue at 42nd Street recreates a public space that was lost since the completion of the traffic viaduct in 1913. *Grand Central Partnership*

Design should allow spaces to accommodate large events, without creating space feel deserted at other times. Flexible design allows spaces to a scale to the size appropriate size for the level of use. This may be done on a daily basis, as with the Leicester Square Pedestrian Zone, where commercial deliveries during the morning create a sense of activity around the square, while the streets' closure to traffic after noon allows pedestrians, cafes and street performers to spill out into the space; may be a seasonal occurrence, as with the closure of Park Avenue in front of Grand Central Terminal from May through October to create Pershing Square Plaza; or for special events only, as with the complete closure of Times Square to accommodate the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and New Years Eve celebration.

Design Principles

13. **Create spaces that users can customize** in real time according to their needs.

14. **Organize functions temporally as well as spatially**, allowing the same space to serve multiple functions throughout the day and year.

6

Conceptual Design

A new vision for Downtown Los Angeles in the 21st Century

Synthesizing the lessons of the case studies and the current and emerging trends, this chapter presents one possible design solution for the future development of Union Station.

Downtown Los Angeles is the nexus of Southern California. The current and emerging trends suggest that in the twenty-first century, it will a place of convergence that brings together tourists and residents, the city's history and its future development, and engages all of the Los Angeles' diverse communities. Union Station will be the centerpiece of a reinvented city center, embody will serve three important functions: first, it will be both a gateway and a destination; second, it will provide a link between the city's past and future; and, third, it will be a cultural crossroads, where the region's many diverse communities come together as one city. The station will be the global entry point to Southern California, serving visitors who connect from regional airports via high-speed rail. It will restore the link between the Plaza and the Los Angeles River, and create a bridge from the culture and tourism-oriented Olvera Street area to the emerging Clean-Tech Corridor along the eastern edge of Downtown. Drawing on the city's historic patterns, the lessons of New York and London, and the urban design principles articulated in the previous chapter, this chapter presents one possible future for Union Station. This conceptual design is in part a projection of the current and emerging trends and in part an act of imagination, leaping beyond the status quo to envision a better city which does not yet exist, but could.

Existing Conditions

Union Station is located in the north-west corner of Downtown Los Angeles, adjacent to the historic Plaza and Olvera Street, on the opposite side of the freeway from City Hall and the Civic Center. The station is located within close proximity of cultural institutions, such as the El Pueblo Historic District surrounding the Plaza; the Music Center, on nearby Bunker Hill; and the Japanese-American National Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art's Geffen Contemporary in Little Tokyo. However, the site is currently disconnected from these attractions and surrounding districts. The historic street and building pattern was disrupted by the construction of the freeway in the 1950s. Along with the demolition of other structures to create surface parking lots, development of the freeway and connecting ramps disconnected the station and created holes in the urban fabric of the area. As illustrated in Figures 6-2 and 6-3, the station site is currently surrounded by wide arterial roads and the Hollywood Freeway. Freeway on-ramps and surface parking lots create a disconnect between the station and the historic plaza (8), while

Fig. 6-1 The Image of Downtown Los Angeles

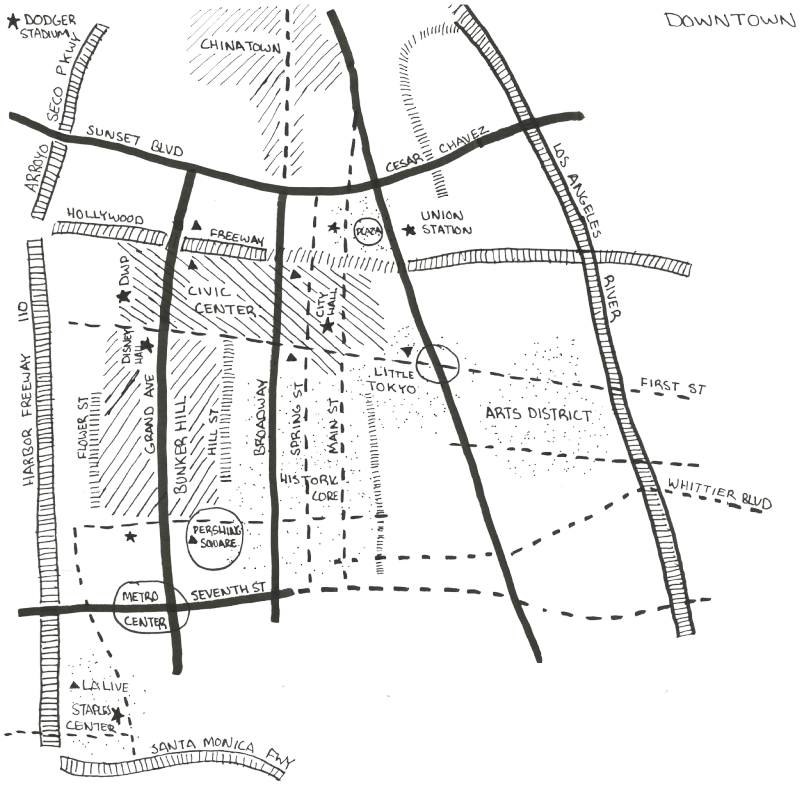
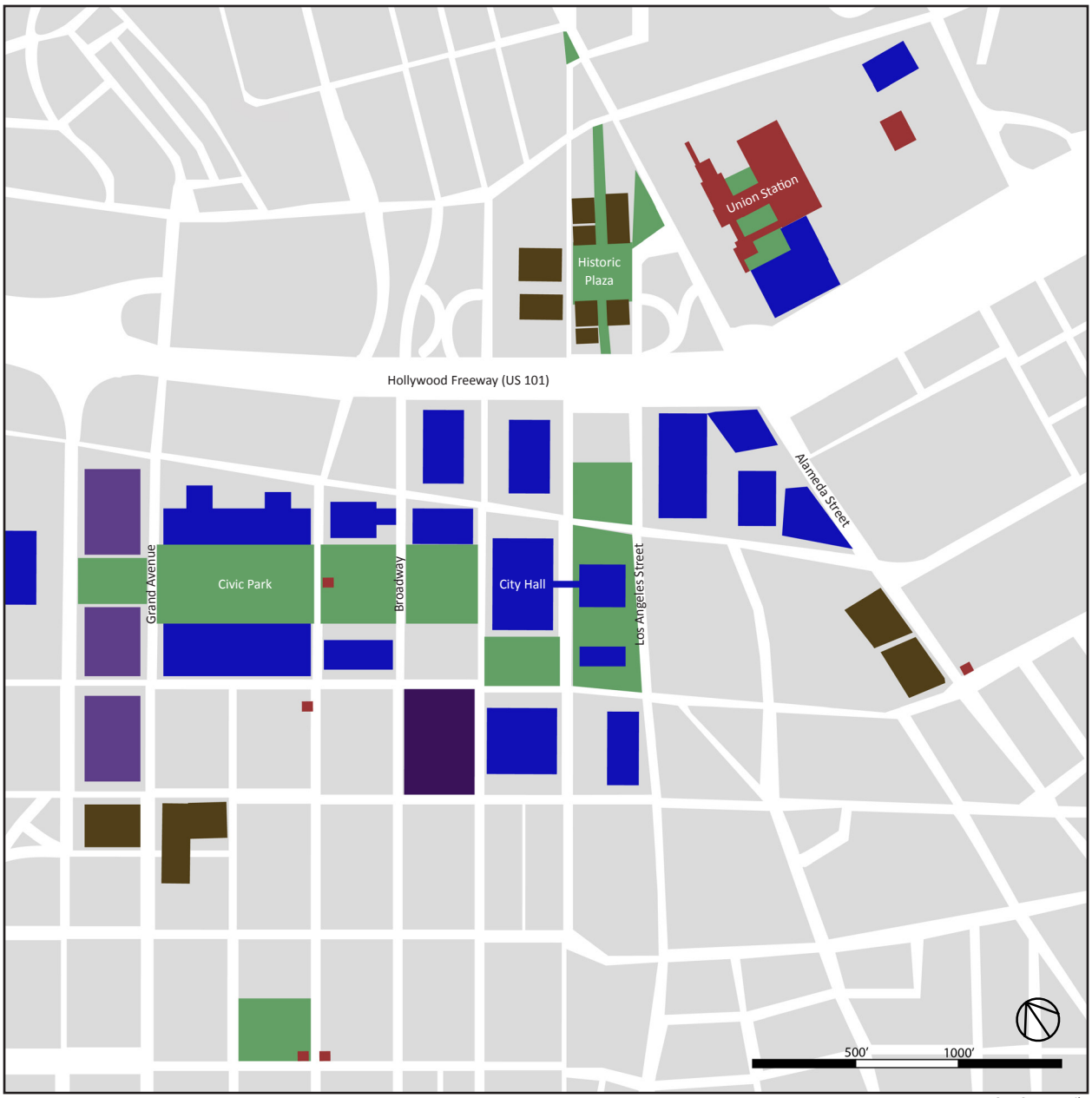


Fig. 6-2 Downtown Los Angeles Existing Conditions



- TRANSIT
- GOVERNMENT OFFICE
- MEDIA
- PREFORMING ARTS (THEATRES)
- CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS (MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES
- OPEN SPACE

the City's Piper Technical Center (19) and Metro's Support Services Center (18) block access and views to the Los Angeles River. The primary uses on the site are government offices, including the headquarters of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) (4) and Metropolitan Water District (MWD) (5), with limited residential and retail. This use mix fails to create vibrancy outside of office hours. Surrounding the station site are the County-controlled Men's Central Jail (16) and Twin Towers Correctional Facility (17), as well as the Federal Metropolitan Detention Center (20). The area between the county correctional facilities and the station is dominated by bail bondsmen and other prison-related uses, which may contribute to a perception that the area is unsafe. However, other than that area, all parcels surrounding the station are publicly-owned, which creates the potential for coordinated planning and development of the station district. Future development and land use in the area is currently governed by the City's *Alameda District Specific Plan*, which permits approximately 6 million square feet of development on the station site and up to 13 million square feet total in the district.

Existing Conditions

1. Historic Station Building
2. Station Platforms
3. East Portal
4. One Gateway Plaza, Metro Headquarters
5. Metropolitan Water District Building
6. Residential
7. Historic Terminal Annex
8. Historic Plaza
9. Plaza Catholic Church
10. Mexican-American Museum
11. Pico House Museum
12. Chinese-American Museum
13. Plaza Methodist Church
14. Placita de Dolores
15. The California Endowment (non-profit foundation)
16. Men's Central Jail (County of Los Angeles)
17. Twin Tower Correctional Facility (County of Los Angeles)
18. Metro Support Services Center
19. Piper Technical Center (City of Los Angeles Public Works)
20. Metropolitan Detention Center (U.S. Government)
21. Federal Building (U.S. Government)
22. Chinatown Gateway

P Parking

Fig. 6-3 Los Angeles Union Station Existing Conditions

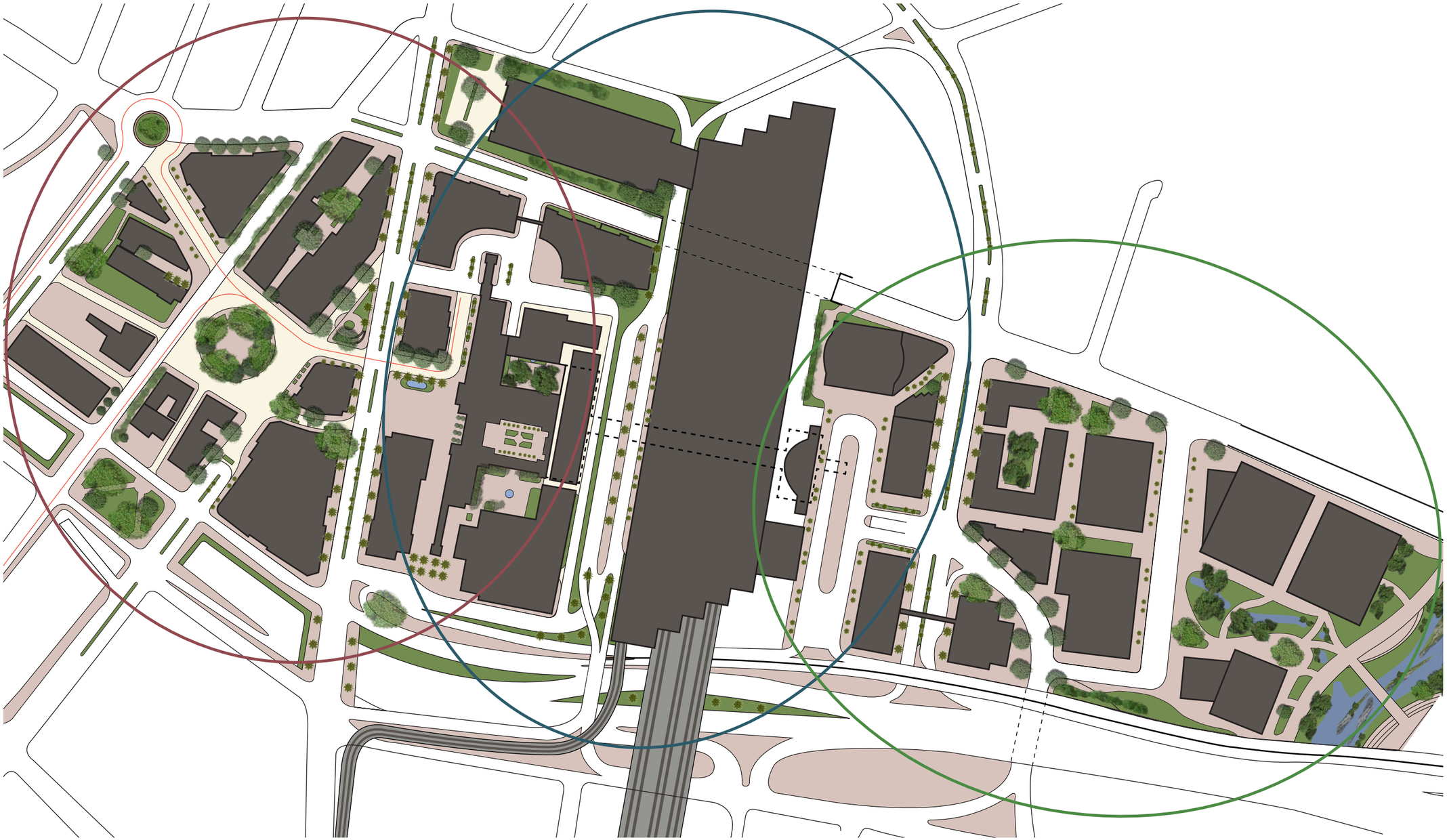
Metro-owened Union Station property highlighted in center.

Fig. 6-4 Focus Areas

HISTORIC PLAZA DISTRICT

CENTRAL STATION AREA

EAST GATEWAY / LA RIVER CLEAN-TECH DISTRICT



Conceptual Design

A plan for Union Station should look beyond the existing station site and include connections to surrounding areas. This conceptual design extends from the Los Angeles River to the Historic Plaza, and features three distinct areas:

1. **The Central Station Area**, which will continue to serve as the hub of the region's growing subway, light-rail and commuter rail network, while becoming a gateway for visitors from across the state and around the world with the future development of high-speed rail. Development builds on this, with uses that serve travelers like hotels and restaurants, and uses that draw people together, like convention facilities and event space.

2. **The Historic Plaza District**, which serves as a bridge between the station and the cultural attractions of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument. New buildings of the foundations of those removed for freeway construction in the 1950s, restore the historic pattern of openess and enclosure.

3. **The East Gateway / L.A River Clean-Tech District**, which connects the station to a reinvented riverfront and 21st century production zone. Larger buildings here house new green-technology firms, clean manufacturing and media production.

The following sections describe these three areas, and detail how their design responds to the five elements and design principles articulated in the previous chapter.

THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN STATION

Central Station Area

1. Historic Station Building (existing)
2. Union Station Concourse (new, over existing platforms)
3. East Portal (existing)
4. Union Station Studios
5. Convention Center
6. Historic Terminal Annex / Convention Center
7. Alameda Plaza
8. Retail and Restaurants with Residential above
9. Retail with commercial office above
10. Boutique Hotel
11. Metropolitan Water District Building (existing)
12. Residential (existing)
13. One Gateway Plaza, Metro Headquarters (existing)
14. High-tech and media office

Historic Plaza District

15. Historic Plaza (existing)
16. Plaza Catholic Church (existing)
17. Mexican-American Museum (existing)
18. Pico House Museum (existing)
19. Chinese American Museum (existing)
20. Plaza Methodist Church (existing)
21. Aliva Adobe Museum (existing)
22. Olvera Street (existing)
23. Restaurants and Retail (existing)
24. Los Angeles Downtown Streetcar
25. Restaurants and Retail
26. Hotel and Residential
27. Commercial Office
28. Mixed-Use Office and Residential
29. Mixed-Use Retail and Residential
30. Park 101

East Gateway / L.A River Clean-Tech District

31. Wetlands Park
32. Higher Education
33. Clean-Tech Research and Manufacturing
34. Mixed-Use Retail and Residential
35. Multi-modal bike and pedestrian path

Fig. 6-5 Conceptual Site Plan

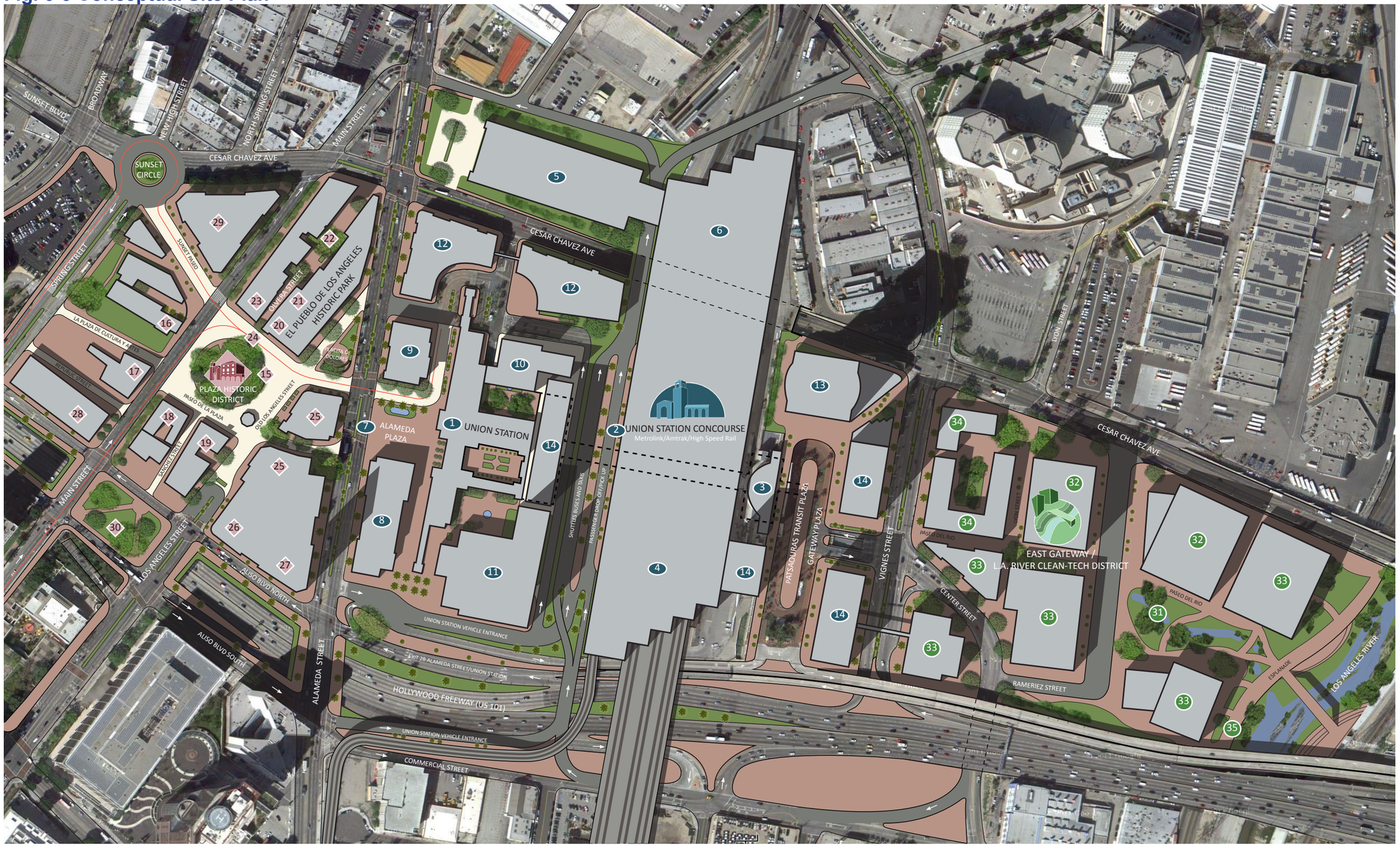
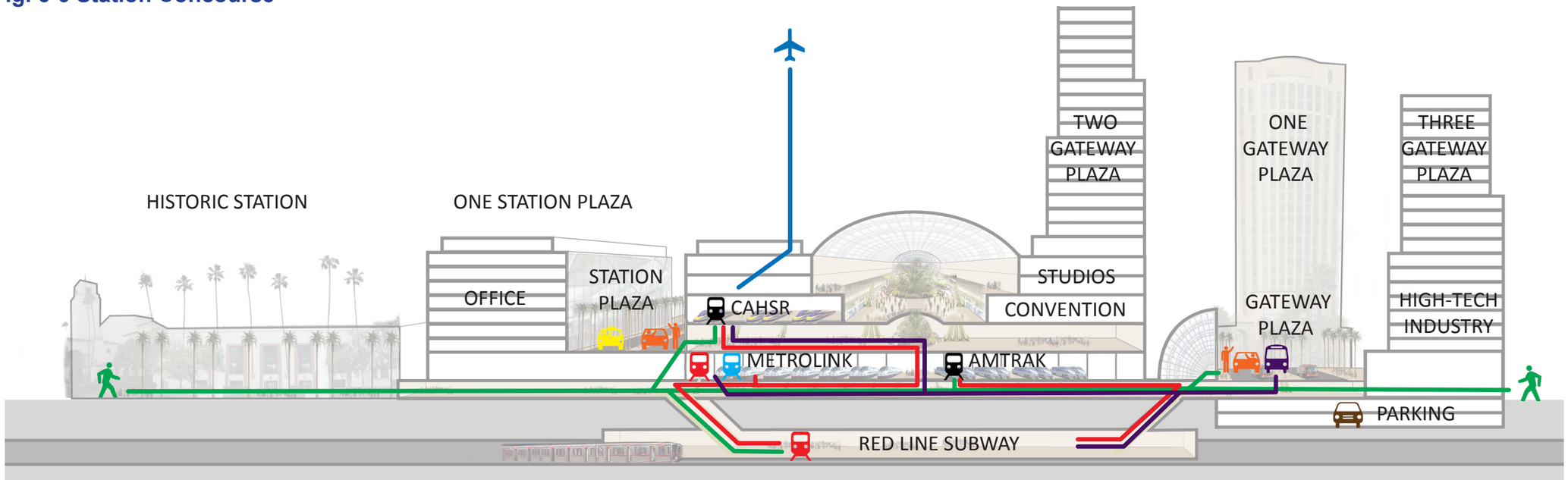


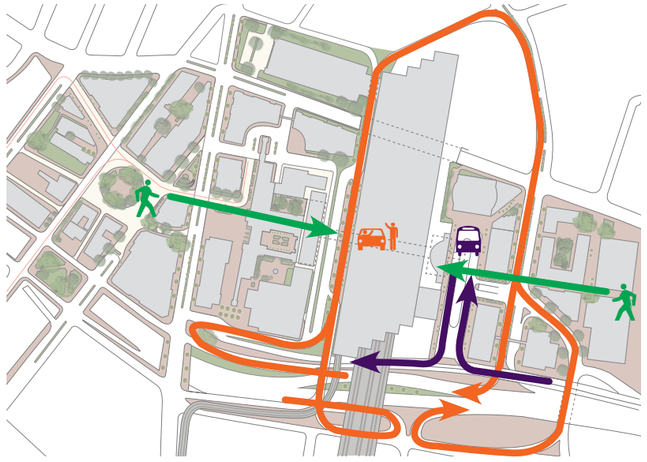
Fig. 6-6 Station Concourse



CONNECTIONS

GLOBAL\NATIONAL REGIONAL LOCAL

- PEDESTRIANS
- TAXI
- METRO BUS
- METRO RAIL GOLD LINE + RED LINE
- METROLINK COMMUTER RAIL
- PASSENGER DROP OFF
- AUTO PARKING
- HIGH SPEED RAIL + AMTRAK
- AIR TRAVEL
  - VIA LA/ONTARIO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
  - LA/PALMDALE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
  - BOB HOPE/BURBANK AIRPORT



Central Station Area

The centerpiece of the project will be the Station Concourse, located behind the historic station building, above the existing platforms. While Union Station mostly serves commuters today, with the addition of high speed rail, the station will function more like an airport, serving long-distance travelers as well and becoming the global gateway for Los Angeles. The scheme balances the needs of local and long-distance travelers, with easy access to local transit on the lower levels and high speed rail above.

With Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) operating at capacity, increased demand for air travel will be met by satellite airports in Ontario and Palmdale, with direct connections to Downtown Los Angeles via high speed rail or Metrolink. Integrated baggage and ticketing services, could allow passengers to purchase their airline and train tickets together and check or claim luggage at Union Station when connecting to a flight by rail. In the future, the station may be the entry point for as many as half the of the 30 million annual visitors to Los Angeles.[1]

Under this vision, the historic station building will remain the front entrance for the station, and the main entrance for passengers arriving by foot from surrounding Downtown districts; however, most passengers will arrive at the station by transit. Transit connectivity is provided by consolidating all transportation modes in the vertically-integrated, centralized Station Concourse, as illustrated in Fig. 6-6. The California High-Speed Rail Authority's current business plan calls for a blended approach to high-speed service, in which high speed trains will utilize existing commuter rail lines in the Los Angeles area. This and the current phasing plan means that passengers traveling from points north to San Bernadino, Riverside, San Diego and possibly even Anaheim will need to transfer at Los Angeles Union Station to complete their trip. Therefore, the design of Union Station and the ease with which it facilities transfers between different rail services and modes of transportation,

Atocha Station
The design of the interior space of the station concourse is inspired by the gardens inside Madrid's Atocha Station. *Cheri Lucas*

1 In 20011, 26.9 million people visited Los Angeles, an increase of 4.2% over the previous year. International visitation increased more dramatically, growing 7% to 5.9 million. "Los Angeles Experiences Record All-Time High for Total Visitors in 2011," Discover Los Angeles, Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board. http://discoverlosangeles.com/business-services/la-inc/tourism-is-number-one-industry-in-los-angeles.html

will have a major impact on the success of the entire California High-Speed Rail system. By stacking high-speed, long-distance service above local and regional rail, the design allows for easy transfers between lines. Designing all platforms and tracks to accommodate both high-speed and regional trains provides maximum operational flexibility, and allows for cross-platform connections between high-speed trains and regional rail service. Additionally, vertically separating station access, and adding a concourse level above the existing platforms will balance the needs of commuters and long-distance travelers.

Auto access, will be located adjacent to the concourse along a new, elevated, four-lane driveway (A) reducing traffic along Alameda Street in front of the station. With new direct connections from the Hollywood Freeway, taxis and vehicles picking up or dropping off passengers, will avoid surface streets when entering the Central Station Area. Pedestrians no longer need to maneuver around vehicles crowded in front of the historic station—pedestrian and vehicular traffic is grade-separated, and the old station driveway is reinvented as an open plaza.

The uses of the Central Station Area will reflect the diversity of economic activity in Los Angeles, and the station's role as a place of coming together, as shown is Figures 6-6 and 6-7. The station is already used extensively for filming; studio facilities on the upper levels of the Station Concourse (4) will further support this use, and integrate with the arts district south of site. Together with retail spaces and conference facilities (6), they will make the concourse a place of production, consumption and convergence. Surrounding the historic station building are a boutique hotel (10) to the north of the existing courtyard, and two new mixed-use buildings (8 and 9) with ground floor retail and restaurants. The hotel buffers the existing residential buildings (12), while the mixed-use buildings frame and activate the pedestrian plaza created in front of the station on Alameda Street (7). To the east of the Station Concourse, new high-rise development (14) clustered around the existing Metro Headquaters (13) provides flexible office space for media firms and technology companies located in the Clean-Tech Corridor and Arts District to the south and east.

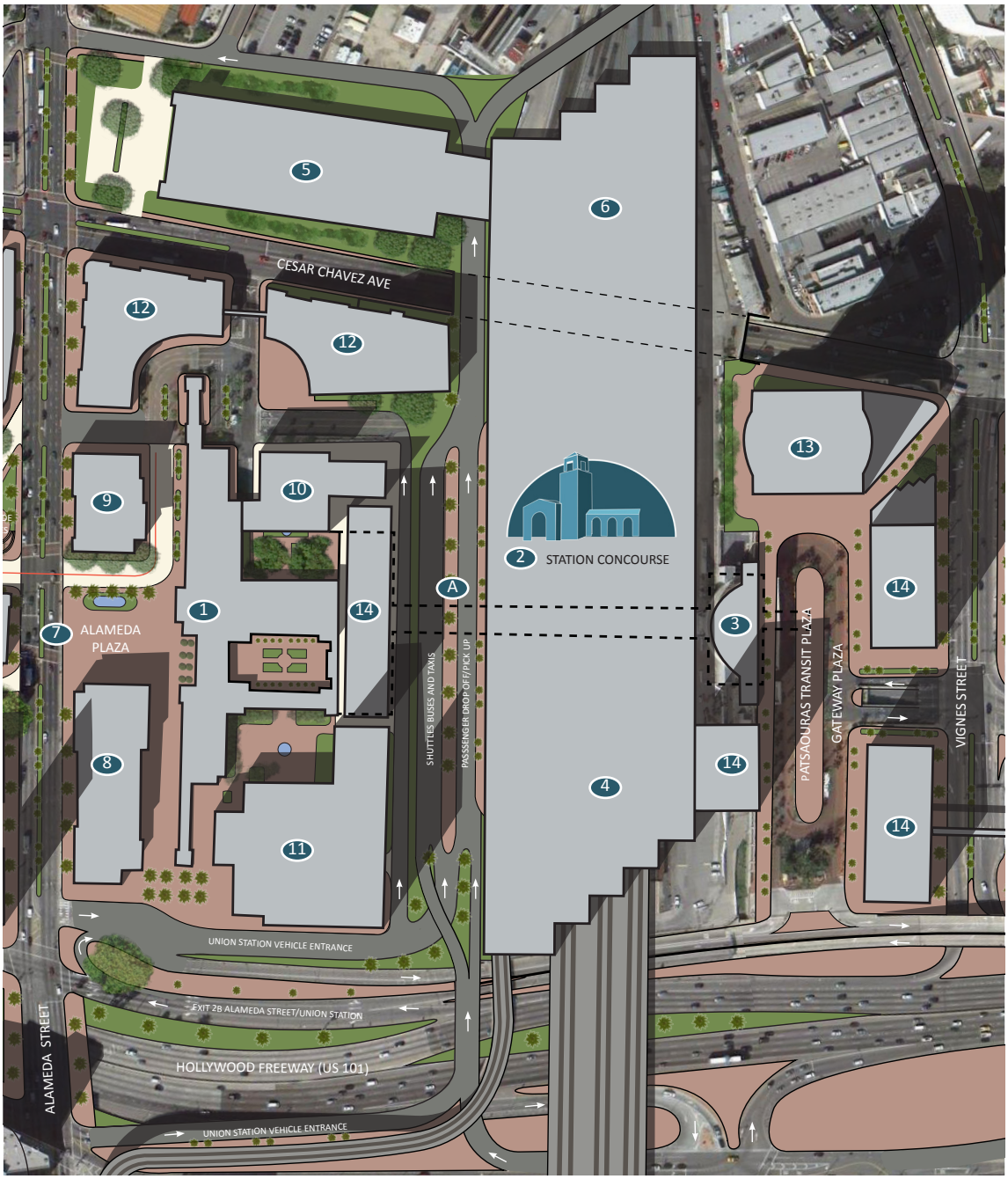
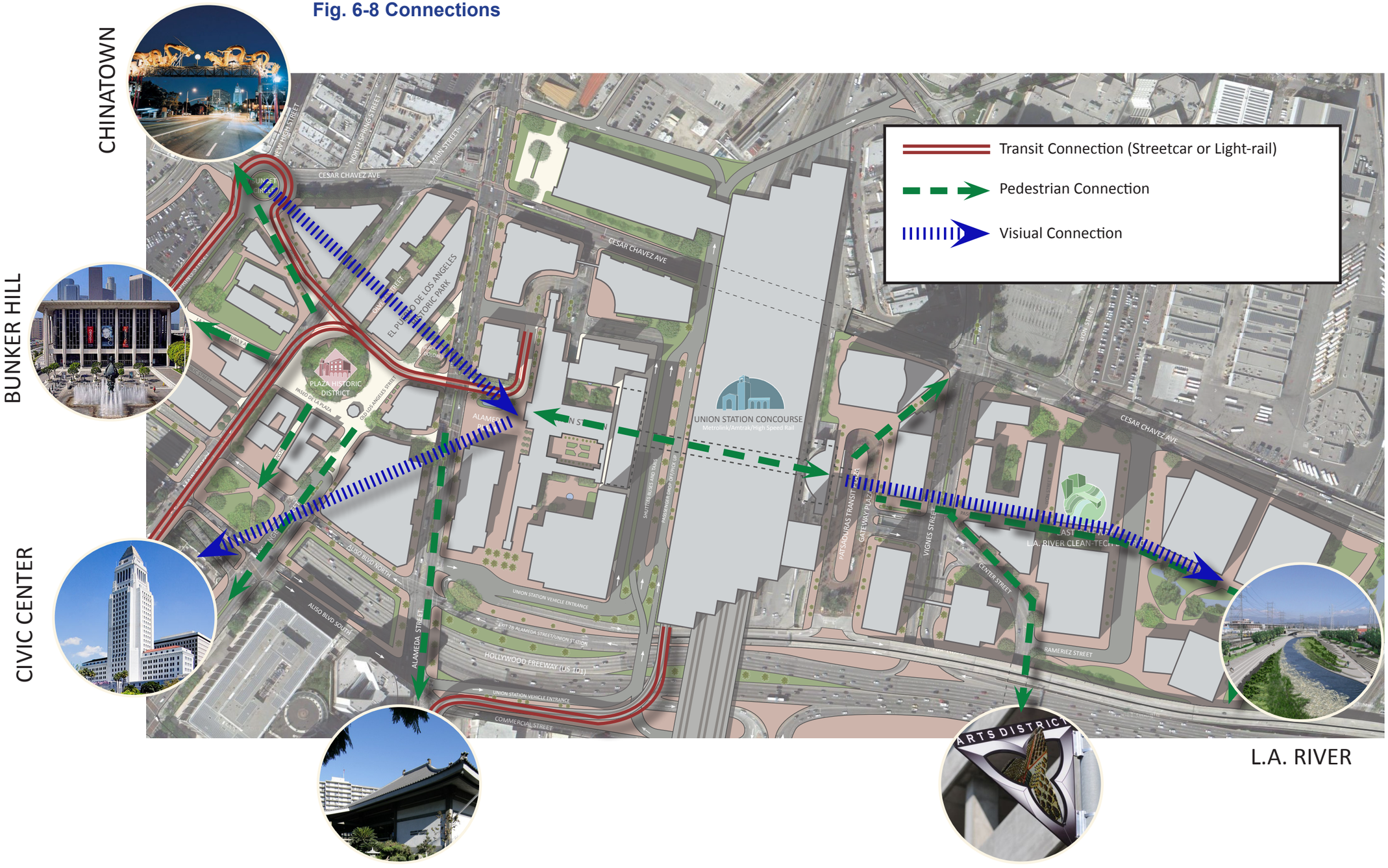


Fig. 6-7 Central Station Area

A. Station Driveway/ Passenger Loading
1. Historic Station Building (existing)
2. Union Station Concourse (new, over existing platforms)
3. East Portal (existing)
4. Union Station Studios
5. Convention Center
6. Historic Terminal Annex / Convention Center
7. Alameda Plaza
8. Retail and Restaurants with Residential above
9. Retail with commercial office above
10. Boutique Hotel
11. Metropolitan Water District Building (existing)
12. Residential (existing)
13. One Gateway Plaza, Metro Headquarters (existing)
14. High-tech and media office

Just as important as the connections that can be made within the station are the connections that can be made without: the links between the site and the surrounding districts of downtown. As illustrated in Figure 6-8, this plan envisions three types of connections: pedestrian connections, transit connections and visual connections. The first would include pedestrianized streets and enhanced sidewalks along existing public rights-of-way, as well as the recreation of historic streets, such as Sunset Boulevard linking the plaza with Chinatown. Extending the proposed Downtown streetcar through the district to a terminus at the station, would not only provide a physical link to the rest of Downtown but the tracks would serve as a visual cue to the connections that are possible from the station. Finally, the preservation of view corridors to the station's existing clock tower and to the tower of City Hall, along with the creation of new slightlines linking the station to the river, aid in wayfinding. This plan for Union Station also creates new public space in the form of Alameda Plaza that will be connected to existing civic spaces, creating a network of public space. At the centerpiece of the network is the historic plaza. Restored to its role as the central civic space of the city, it's the hub of the pedestrian network linking the various parts of Downtown to Union Station.

Fig. 6-8 Connections



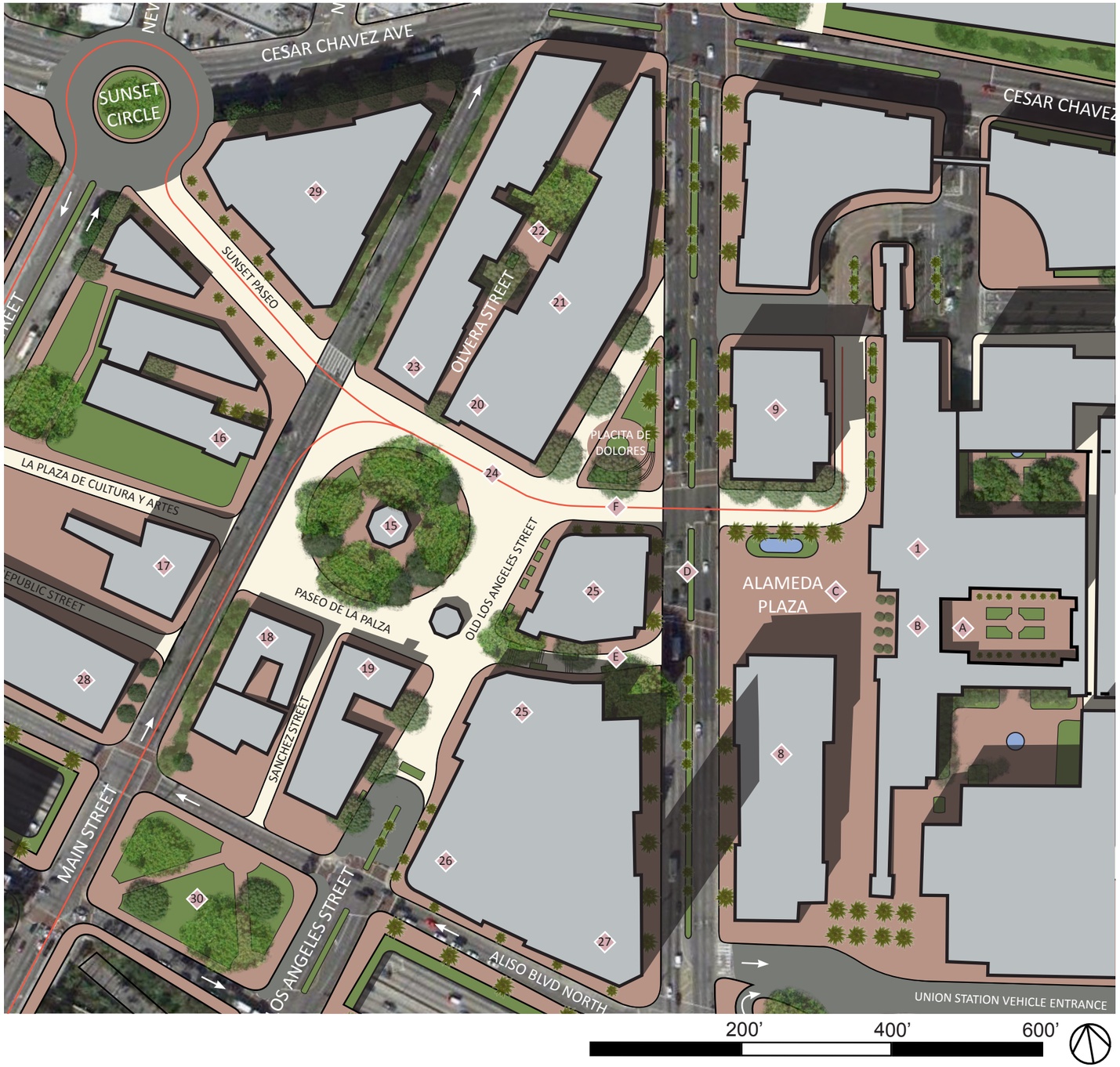


Fig. 6-9 Historic Plaza District

A. Station Courtyard
B. Station Arcade
C. Alameda Plaza
D. Alameda Street
E. Paseo de la Plaza
F. Sunset Paseo
1. Historic Station Building (existing)
8. South Plaza Building
9. North Plaza Building
15. Historic Plaza (existing)
16. Plaza Catholic Church (existing)
17. Mexican-American Museum (existing)
18. Pico House Museum (existing)
19. Chinese American Museum (existing)
20. Plaza Methodist Church (existing)
21. Aliva Adobe Museum (existing)
22. Olvera Street (existing)
23. Restaurants and Retail (existing)
24. Los Angeles Downtown Streetcar
25. Restaurants and Retail
26. Hotel and Residential
27. Commercial Office

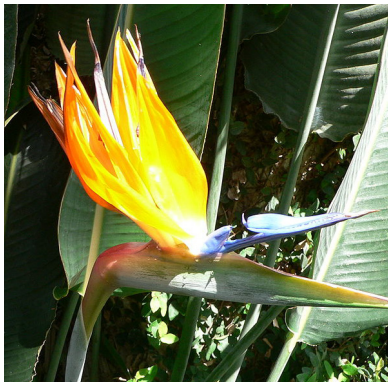
Historic Plaza District

From the modern concourse, arriving passengers descend into the narrow confines of the underground concourse of the historic station, before emerging in the sunlit open patios on the south side of the station building. The South Patio (A), which remains unchanged since it was built with the station in 1939, is filled with landscaping intended to showcase the city as a terrestrial paradise, which was the image of the region promoted by civic boosters in the early twentieth century. Brightly flowering Bird of Paradise plants, the official city flower, and towering Mexican Fan Palms, an unofficial symbol of Los Angeles, reinforce this image, while shady California pepper trees provide relief from the sun. Across the courtyard, the station's landmark clock tower, reminiscent of the bell towers of California Missions, serves as a beacon; it draws attention to the high welcoming arches of the west arcade, through which lie Alameda Street, the historic plaza and rest of the city.

That pattern, the experience of moving through a darker, narrow space to emerge in an open, yet comfortably enclosed space bathed in the warm Southern California sun, is repeated in the design of the historic plaza area. The arcade (B), opens onto a broad square, known as Alameda Plaza where the station driveway and auto drop-off area are today (C). New buildings matching the height of the historic station will define the space. Restaurants and cafes located in the ground level of the north and south plaza buildings (8 and 9) will create centers of activity that spill out into the plaza. The south plaza building will shade the space in the afternoon, while a row of Moreton Bay Fig trees along the north edge of plaza will provide cover for outdoor seating there and cool the north plaza building.

In contrast to the station courtyards, Alameda Plaza features few fixed elements. It is populated with moveable objects, such as folding chairs, cafe tables and portable planters, which allows the space to be reconfigured for multiple uses: in the morning the plaza may be mostly open, allowing the crush of commuters to flow through unimpeded; by noon, the square may be filled with tables and umbrellas to accommodate the patrons of the adjacent

Existing Historic Flora



Bird of Paradise
The Bird of Paradise (Strelitzia reginae) is the official flower of the City of Los Angeles

California Pepper Tree
An original feature of the landscaping of the station, despite its common name, the California Pepper Tree (Schinus molle) is not native to the state.
Michael J Schumacher, University of Arizona

Moreton Bay Fig Tree
Moreton Bay Figs (Ficus macrophylla), are common in historic sections of Los Angeles. Those in the Plaza were planted in the 1870s.

Taste of Italy, 2010
Sponsored by the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, the event celebrates the city's Italian-American community's roots in the Plaza area.
Italian American Museum of Los Angeles

Restaurants along Olvera Street
Like the station, businesses along Olvera Street blur the line between indoors and out. *Author photo, 2012*

restaurants and the food trucks that park along the plaza's edge; by dusk the space may be cleared again, except for the crowd gathering around the pop up stage where an outdoor concert is about to begin. Not only can the space change throughout the day, but it is designed to take on a different character on the weekends, when Downtown is quitter without the crowd of office workers that dominates during the week. The block of Alameda Street adjacent to the plaza can be closed to traffic during major events, such as the annual *Cinco de Mayo,* Chinese New Year and Taste of Italy celebrations. But on normal weekends, the street is only closed on Sunday, when a farmers market catering to Downtown residents fills the space.

The station, and Alameda Plaza, are linked to the historic Plaza and Olvera Street by two pedestrian *paseos*, each with its own character. As depicted in Figure 6-9, the southern of the two, Paseo de la Plaza (E), is a narrow, shaded alleyway lined with shops and restaurants, much like Olvera Street. The existing Moreton Bay Fig trees remain, become focal points along the walk, and lending a sense of history to the space. The paseo slopes up from Alameda Street, and at the top of the hill one emerges from the intimate enclosure of the paseo into the openness and activity of the historic Plaza.

Along the north, where Los Angeles Street is today, is a wider, more open pedestrian connection (F). The street has sidewalks, like the streets around the historic plaza, but the only vehicle allowed is the electric streetcar, which links the station with the Broadway theatre district, Pershing Square, Bunker Hill and LA Live. All the elements of this street, from the sidewalks to the streetcar, recall the time when Sunset Boulevard passed through here.

The intimate urban scale of the pedestrian paseos and Historic Plaza Area, is created by adding new buildings on the footprints of those removed during the freeway construction of the 1950s (25-27). A new building between the two pedestrian connections between the station and historic Plaza restores the traditional definition of the Plaza's eastern edge. Across the Plaza, adjacent to the Catholic church, *La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Reina*

Olvera Street
Shops and restaurants line the narrow pedestrian way.
Author photo, 2012

de Los Ángeles, new development replaces the existing surface parking lot (29), restoring the urban enclosure of Main Street, which has been missing since buildings along its north side were removed. A pedestrian connection along the former alignment of Sunset Boulevard, links the Plaza with the intersection of Broadway and Cesar Chavez Avenue, better integrating Chinatown with the Historic Plaza District, and restoring Union Station's role as the terminating vista for one of Los Angeles's most famous boulevards. At the intersection of Spring and Cesar Chavez Avenue/ Sunset Boulevard, a new traffic circle inspired by the City's original vision for the civic center, marks the node and western entrance to the district.

Los Angeles CleanTech Corridor
The Clean-tech Corridor is a 4 mile-long district on the eastern edge of Downtown LA, along both banks of the Los Angeles River. Union Station is highlighted.
City of Los Angeles

East Gateway / L.A. River Clean-Tech District

On the other side of the Station Concourse, the East Gateway and LA River Clean-Tech District links the city's past and future, integrating natural systems and 21st century technology, and connecting the station to the Arts District to the south and to the Eastside neighborhoods across the river. The district also incorporates two major City initiatives: the Clean-Tech Corridor and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan.

The L.A. Clean-Tech Corridor, is the city's effort to reinvent the industrial belt along the eastern edge of Downtown as a site for high-tech innovation and manufacturing. Planned projects include the 30,000 square-foot La Kretz Innovation Campus, which will include R&D labs, conference and work force training facilities when it opens in 2013, and the 500,000 square-foot Clean-Tech Manufacturing Center. The Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan is the City's blueprint for reclaiming the thirty-two miles of the Los Angeles River within in the city, transforming it from a single-purpose flood control channel into a greenway network that provides environmental and recreational amenities for the region. The integration of these two concepts provides the vision for the station's East Gateway and LA River Clean-Tech District.

As shown in Figure 6-10, adjacent to the East Portal of the station (3), new high-rise commercial development around Gateway Plaza provides space for media and design firms, creating a new Digital Arts District (14). The architecture of these buildings matches the neo-deco design of the existing 25-story Metro Headquarters Building at One Gateway Plaza (13), harmonizing with the historic station. Further east, larger floor-plate buildings, in scale with those in the industrial corridor along the river, accommodate up to 700,000 square-feet high-tech manufacturing and green industry (33), as well as for educational uses that could be developed in partnership with the region's existing research universities (32).

Moving east across the site from the station, the landscape transitions from urban to naturalistic, with ridged street-pattern

Fig. 6-10 East Gateway / L.A. River Clean-Tech District

28. Mixed-Use Office and Residential
29. Mixed-Use Retail and Residential
30. Park 101
3. East Portal (existing)
13. Metro Headquarters (existing)
14. Media and Design Offices
31. Wetlands Park
32. Higher Education
33. Clean-Tech Research and Manufacturing
34. Mixed-Use Retail and Residential
35. Multi-modal bike and pedestrian path

Union Station East Portal
The East Portal and Patsouras Transit Plaza serve as the entry point to the East Gateway / L.A. River Clean-Tech District. *Metro*

Clean-Tech Manufacturing Center
The $90 million, 500,000-square-foot industrial complex Clean-Tech Manufacturing Center being developed on a former rail yard purchased by LA/CRA, is an example of the type of use that would be appropriate in the East Gateway District. *City of Los Angeles*

transitioning to curvilinear paths following the topography of the site. Similarly, ornamental plantings, such as the Mexican fan palms, which line the project's major north-south axes, give way to cottonwoods, alders and willow trees, recreating the historic riparian ecology of the site. The centerpiece of the LA river clean-tech district is a two-acre constructed wetland park which filters storm-water run-off from the project, before it is discharged into the river (31). A fitting focal point for the River Clean-Tech District and counterpoint to the Historic Plaza, the wetland park showcases the integration of green-technology and natural systems, and demonstrates how the river might have looked when the city was founded in 1781.

While access to the river is currently impeded by the rail lines along its banks, the completion of the Union Station run-through tracks project, which will extend the stations stub end tracks across the freeway, connecting to the main line near the First Street Bridge, make it possible to remove the existing tracks along the west bank of the river between the Hollywood Freeway and Cesar Chavez Avenue. In their place, a bike path and pedestrian promenade along the river create a new connection between the emerging Arts District and Union Station (35).

Los Angeles River
A reinvented Los Angeles River, as envisioned in the City's 2007 *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan*, would serve as the anchor for the East Gateway District. *City of Los Angeles*

Circulation + Access

The existing circulation configuration for auto access to Union Station creates congestion and confusion, as illustrated in Figure 6-11. The front of the station is dominated by automobiles: two wide driveways from Alameda Street lead to a cramped passenger drop off area, taxi queue and two short-term surface parking lots (1). Passengers arriving on foot must navigate across the four-lane loading area immediately in front of the station building. Traffic between the station and the freeway uses Alameda Street, which is prone to congestion during peak hours. Secondary auto access is provided to the east of the station, via Vignes Street (2). There vehicles dropping-off or picking-up passengers share the Gateway Plaza loop with local and express buses. The two separate passenger loading areas can be a source of confusion for arriving passengers meeting friends or family, and together they provide only about 15 to 20 vehicles. The increase in passengers expected with the introduction of high-speed rail will likely overwhelm the existing passenger loading areas, impacting bus operations and traffic on local streets.

Additionally the site is impacted by heavy existing vehicle traffic, which creates a hazard for pedestrian and bicycle access. Alameda Street is a city-designated truck route which connects the industrial area to the south of the station with Interstate 5 to the north (3). The six-lane street, and four-lane Los Angeles Street (4), create a barrier between the station and the historic plaza area.

These issues could be addressed through the five interventions illustrated on the following page.

Fig. 6-11 Existing Circulation

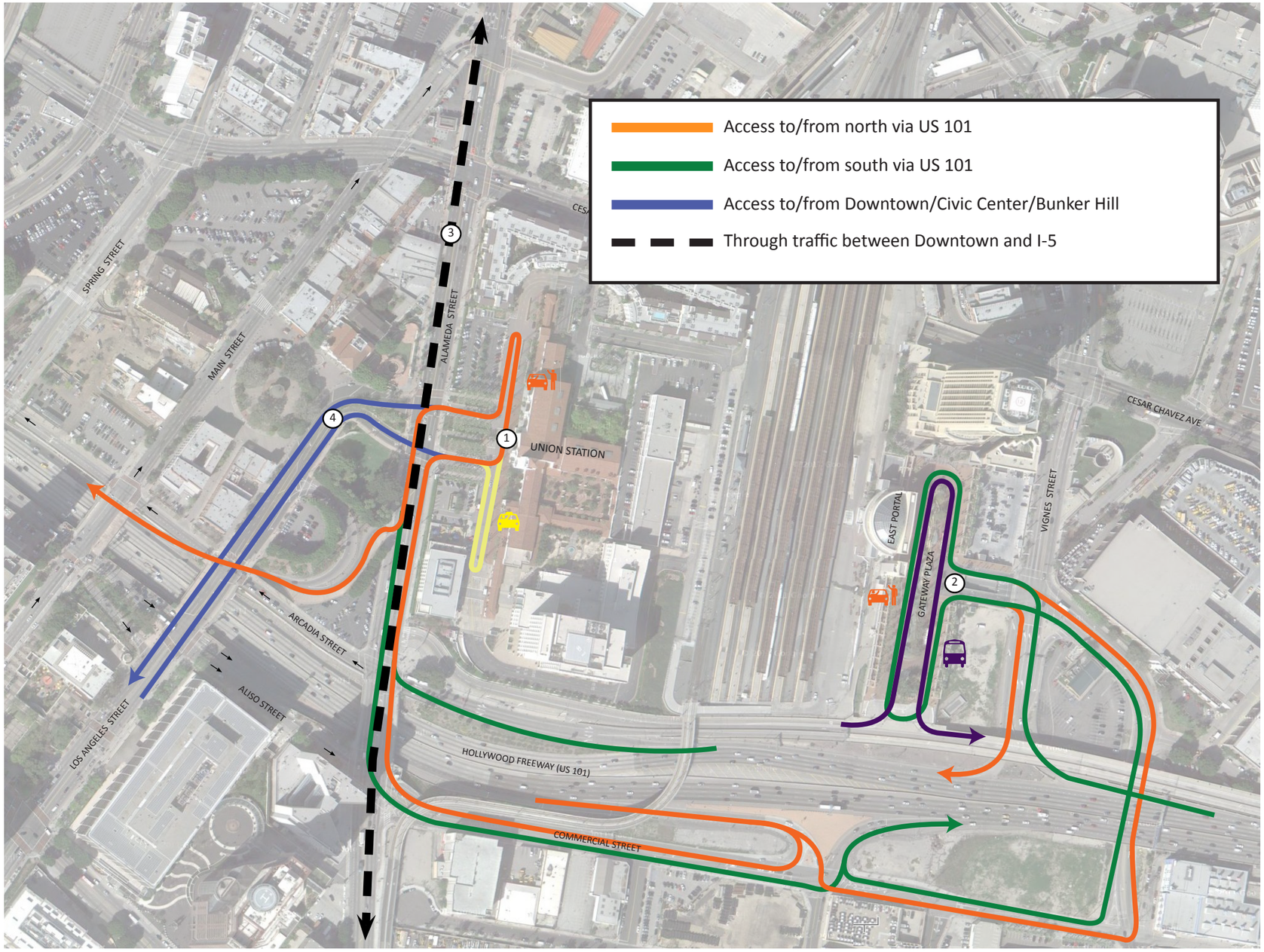
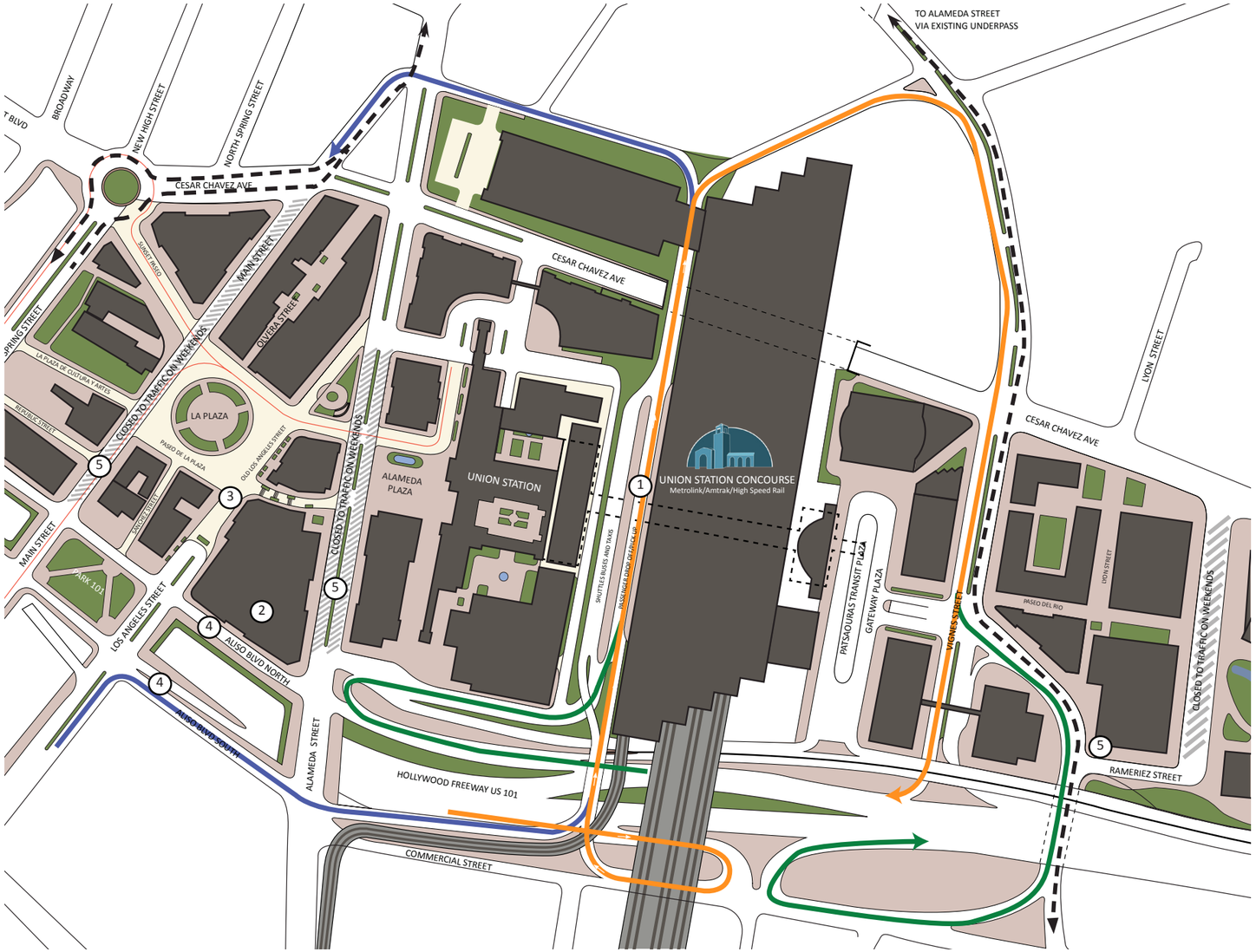


Fig. 6-12 Proposed Circulation



Access to/from north via US 101

Access to/from south via US 101

Access to/from Downtown/Civic Center/Bunker Hill

Through traffic between Downtown and I-5

1. Consolidate and Improve Auto and Bus Access

Consolidating auto access in the center of the site, with an extended passenger loading area elevated above the pedestrian level, will improve vehicular circulation in and around the site. The current auto entrance from Alameda Street will be eliminated, and traffic from south-bound Alameda Street will enter the site from the existing entrance to the El Monte Busway. A new overpass across the Hollywood Freeway will provide an additional entrance at Alameda and Aliso Streets, allowing traffic from Downtown to enter the site without using the existing Alameda Street overpass. Access from the freeway will be facilitated using new direct connections to existing freeway exits: vehicles will be able to access the station from north- or south-bound US 101 without using surface streets. The new passenger load area will accommodate 35 vehicles at curbside spaces as well as 25 taxis and 6 shuttle buses along a second curb area. From there, arriving and departing passengers will enter the station concourse will easy access to all platforms.

Creating a new, extended passenger-loading area alongside the station concourse will allow the Gateway Plaza loop at the east portal of the station to be used exclusively for transit buses, facilitating improved bus operations. Bus stops scattered around the station will be consolidated here, reducing confusion for passengers who will be able to find all transit connections in a single location.

2. Simplify Freeway Access

The existing freeway on-ramps from Los Angeles and Alameda Streets to northbound US 101, which were constructed with the freeway in the 1950s, required the demolition of historic buildings along the south side of Los Angeles Street, greatly altering the character of the street. While their design incorporated the latest engineering standards of the time, the ramps are considered substandard by modern highway design guidelines; among other issues, they have insufficient visibility for traffic entering the freeway, and lack acceleration lanes, forcing motorists to merge quickly with freeway traffic. With current traffic volumes of less than 800-vehicles per hour during peak periods, the closure of this freeway entrance would not have significantly traffic

impacts. Removing those ramps, and replacing them with a new on-ramp at Broadway and Arcadia Street, will simply freeway access and improve highway safety, while reducing traffic in the Historic Plaza Area. Additionally this change will facilitate new development. Currently, the curving ramps divide the block into several oddly-shaped parcels, which are unusable for development; their removal will create an 2.9-acre contiguous parcel that can accommodate new development. This concept has been previously suggested, and is currently under study as part of the planning for Park 101.

3. Pedestrianize Los Angeles Street

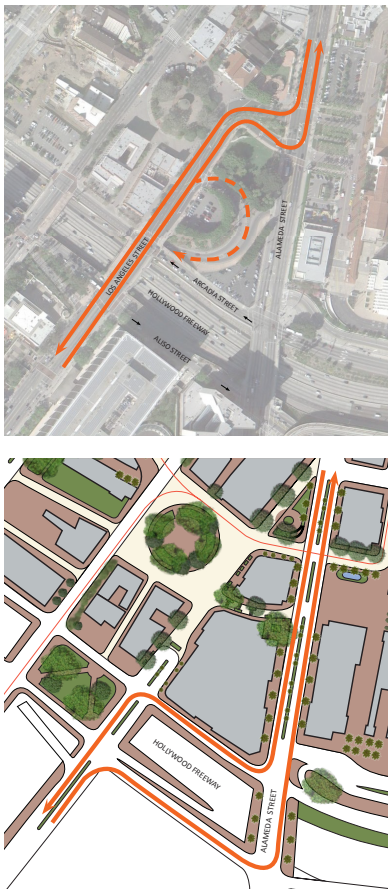
Closing the Los Angeles Street freeway entrance, and relocating the Union Station auto entrance, will eliminate the function of Los Angeles Street between Arcadia and Alameda Street. The other movements, from Los Angeles Street to Alamdea Street, can be accommodated via Arcadia and Aliso Streets. Closing Los Angeles Street to auto traffic will enhance pedestrian access to the Historic Plaza, and allow for new development in the footprints of historic buildings removed during freeway construction.

4. Redesign Frontage Roads as Aliso Boulevard

Historically, Aliso Street formed the southern boundary of the Union Station site. This strong edge was eroded with the construction of the freeway trench, and the transformation of Aliso Street into a one-way frontage road along with Aracdia Street. These streets may need to be widened to accommodate increased traffic following the closure of Los Angeles Street. Renaming the two streets as part of Aliso Boulevard, along with new unified street design along the couplet, provides better integration of the two sides of the freeway and creates a prestigious new address for development fronting this corridor.

5. Allow Weekend Street Closures

North south connections, between Downtown and the Golden State Freeway (I-5) are vital for commuters and industrial uses in the downtown area during the week; however, lower traffic levels on weekends allow the closure of some north-south streets to provide beter east-west pedestrian connections from the Plaza, through the station, to the river. Vignes Street and Spring Street will not be closed, preserving north-south vehicular access.



Los Angeles Street Traffic Pattern
Traffic pattern before (above) and after (below) the closure of the street between Arcadia and Alameda Streets.

Aliso Street
The historic design of Aliso Street informs the creation of Aliso Boulevard. *Los Angeles Railroad Heritage Foundation*

Vibrancy + Land Use

Union Station and the Historic Plaza Area are already vibrant places: the station is a constant hub of activity with thousands of people passing through each day, while street vendors, live music and cultural events all contribute to vibrancy of the Plaza and Olvera Street. The challenge therefore is to enhance this positive quality of the area, and extend it to future development at the site. Focusing on commercial activity and cultural events as the key elements, this plan arranges uses to create and capitalize on pedestrian activity.

At the center of the site, the station serves as a major attraction, drawing people into the site from the surrounding area. Likewise, the adjacent areas of Chinatown, Bunker Hill, the Civic Center, Little Tokyo and the Arts District area all magnets for arriving passengers, and they draw people from the station. This dichotomy creates the constant flow of people to and from the site, and this flow can be directed in ways to enhance the vibrancy of the public spaces and to support retail establishments. By maintaining the historic station building as the point of entry and egress for the Station, it creates a concentration of activity in the new Alameda Plaza, which will become a lively public space, with restaurants and retail activity around its edges. At the west end of the site, the cultural institutions and existing attractions around the Historic Plaza form a second anchor, serving to draw people from the station through the retail corridor in between. A new major hotel located adjacent will serve tourists and business travelers, while its entrance on Los Angeles Street just off the Plaza will be another hub of activity day and night. A smaller, boutique hotel located just north of the historic station building and accessed through the now-unused ticketing hall, creates a minor activity center in what was a dead area of the site, and serves to insulate the existing residential condos along Cesar Chavez Avenue from the greater noise and activity at the center of the site.

RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY

COMMERCIAL
(Retail and Restaurants)

COMMERCIAL
(Hotel)

COMMERCIAL
(Office)

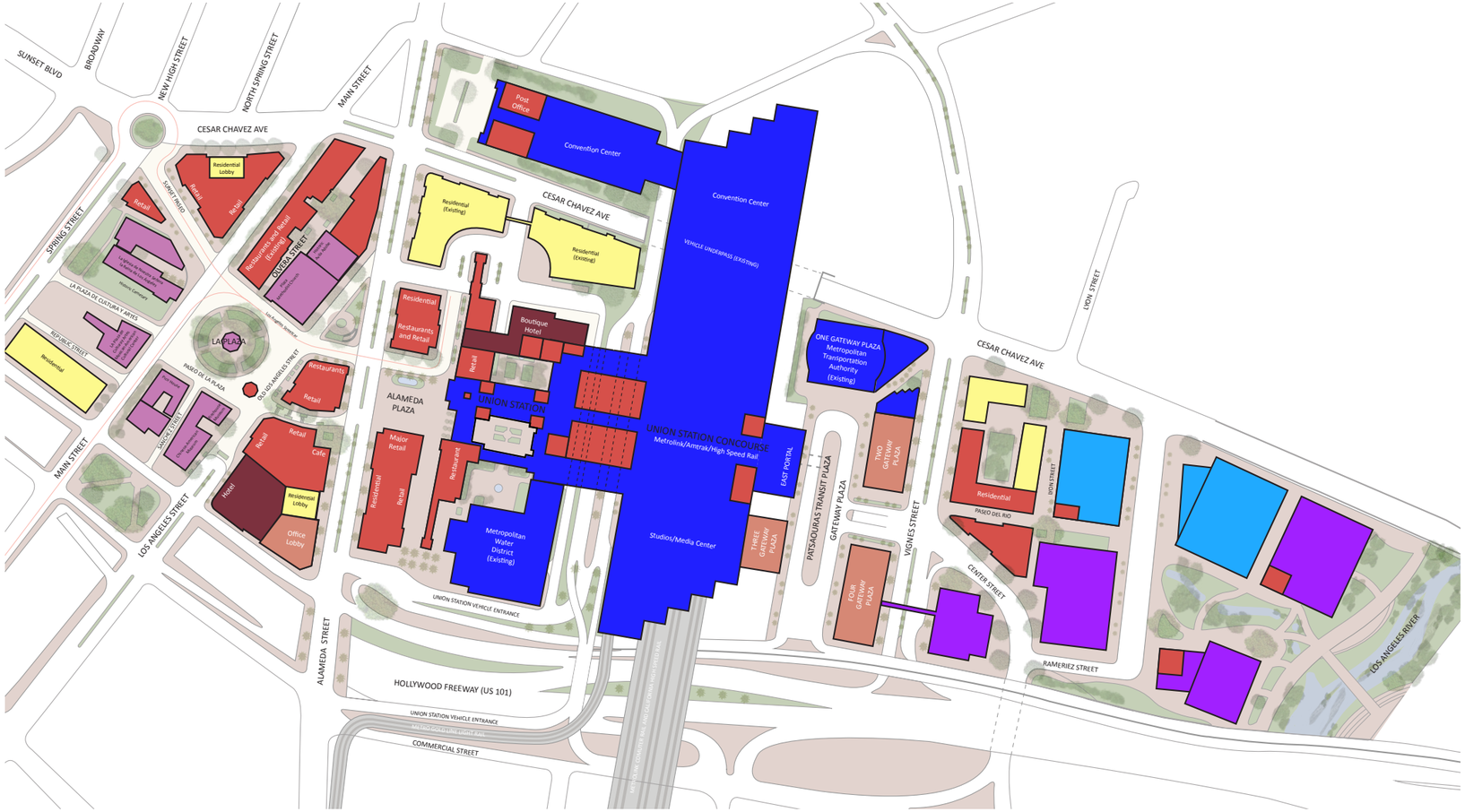
CULTURAL
(Museums and Churches)

PUBLIC
(Transit and Government Office)

INDUSTRIAL
(High Tech)

HIGHER EDUCATION

Fig. 6-13 Proposed Ground Floor Uses



Los Angeles Block

Historically, views of the station from the plaza were framed by buildings along the east side of Los Angeles Street (above). This experience would be recreated by the development of the Los Angeles Block building (below), which would house retail and restaurants.

La Casa de Don Vincente Lugo

The drawing (above) is part of a set completed by U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of National Parks, Buildings and Reservations, Branch of Plans and Designs as part of the Historic American Building Survey.

The photo (below) shows the structure in 1954, shortly before its demolition as part of the construction of the Hollywood Freeway.

Author drawing, 2012

LOS ANGELES BLOCK PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION

Authenticity + Historic Preservation

As a city that blurs architecture and advertising, where streets are designed to look like shopping malls and vice versa, and whose primary industry is creating and projecting fantasy, its not always clear what is authentic in Los Angeles. Nowhere is this truer than on Olvera Street. While the brick streets and picturesquely crumbling stucco walls of this festival marketplace were staged, like a theme park, for visiting tourists, it endures because it represents something authentic as well: the site has as always been a place of commerce, with a mixing of cultures, and this is the underlying character of Olvera Street with persists to this day. Authentic civic spaces can be cultivated by preserving and enhancing the elements of a place that are unique or of cultural or historic significance.

While this plan will add new buildings and pedestrian streets in the style of those now-long-vanished, by respecting the historic street plan, the traditional pattern of openness and enclosure, and the uses once found on the site, these additions can enhance the authenticity of the place. Likewise, the naturalistic landscaping of the East Gateway and LA River Clean-Tech District, while carefully crafted and designed, can be authentic by reflecting the landscaping as it was, and integrating with the river as it is.

With preservation groups in Los Angeles now working to preserve drive-through restaurants and freeway overpasses, it may seem that authenticity or historic value is simply acquired like a patina over time, but not all historic elements are worth preserving. For instance, the driveway and parking lots in front of the station are original, and remain largely unchanged since the station opened in 1939. Yet they are unremarkable and of no historic or cultural significance. The goal of authenticity would be better served by their removal and replacement with an extension of the elements that give the station its defining character; creating a new plaza, reflective of the station courtyards and the historic plaza, would greatly enhance the station's social and cultural value.

7

Conclusion

Reflecting on Possible Futures

Examining six contemporary visions for the future of Los Angeles, this chapter looks forward towards the city in the mid twenty-first century.

In 2011, Metro purchased Union Station for $75 million dollars, bringing the 38-acre complex, including the historic station building, under public ownership for the first time. Seizing the opportunity to envision a new future for the site, and by extension Downtown Los Angeles, the agency put out a request for proposals, seeking what it called "visions" for the new station. The vision plans are not part of the formal process of selecting a firm to design a new master plan for the station district—that will happen separately this year. Instead, the visions are "acts of imagination, they are visions of a potential future," according to Metro Executive Planning Director Martha Welborn, borrowing the phrase from Dennis Gabor.[1] At first the notion of a public agency calling for visions of the city to be in 2050, may seem to be both a whimsical departure from its more serious responsibilities, as the *Los Angeles Downtown News* editorialized, and a radical departure from the time when the station was dedicated as a monument to "private enterprise." However, there is nothing novel about this process. Since the dawn of publicly-led planning in Los Angeles, it has been the purview of city planners to "Dream dreams and see Visions'—visions of a better City to be." And the city as it exists is the manifestation of those ideas. Of course, not every vision is realized in the built form, but every aspect of the built form was first envisioned and then developed. Metro selected six firms to submit visions, and a close examination of these plans is a worthwhile exercise not only

1 Steve Hymon, "Six Visions for Union Station in the year 2050," The Source, Metro, April 25, 2012. http://thesource.metro.net/2012/04/25/six-visions-for-union-station-in-the-year-2050/

because the future may be among them, but because by engaging with them, questioning their merits and reflecting back on our own ideas about the future, we join in the process of inventing of it.

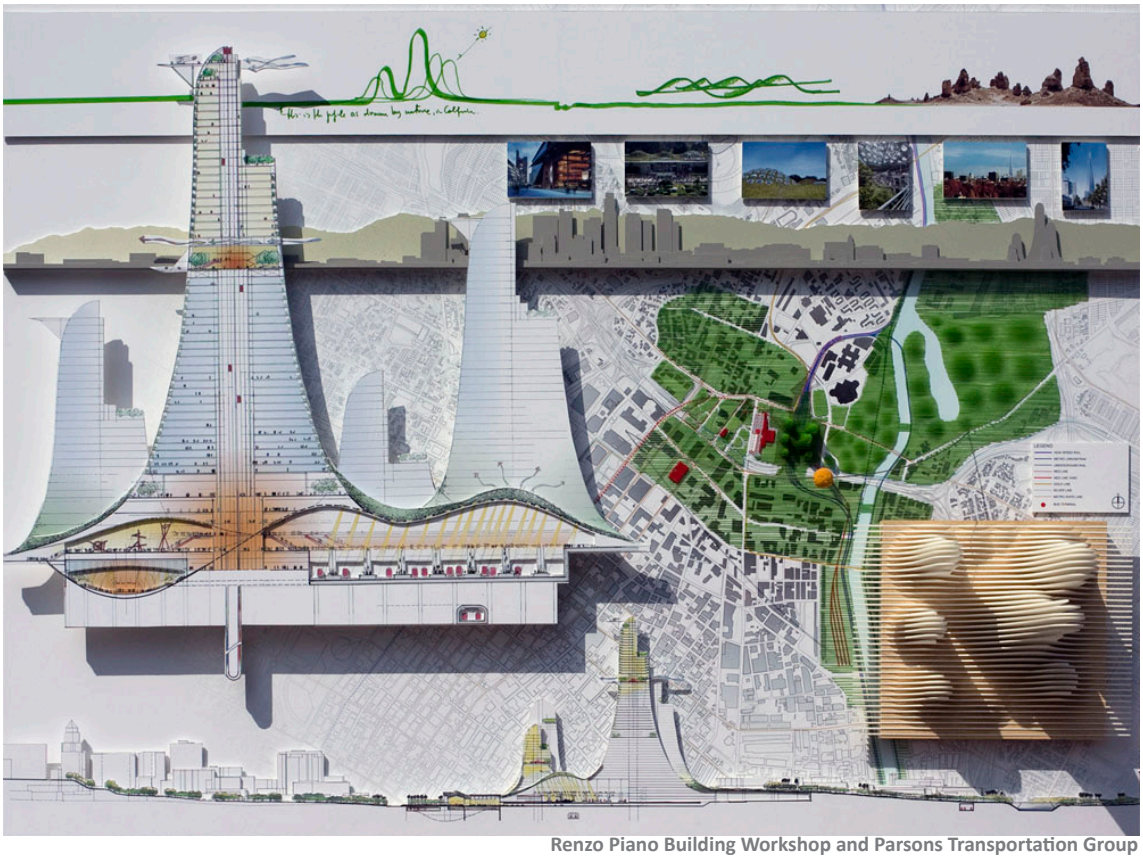
These six visions make it clear that the ambivalent attitude towards urbanization in Los Angeles—the tension between the development of the metropolis and the rejection of it that Fogelson first identified—remains unresolved. The first three schemes present generally anti-urban visions; they are variations on the Garden City model and twentieth century suburban ideals. Of these, only Renzo Piano's is truly innovative, though it is innovative only in that it presents a new way to mask the urban character of an increasingly dense metropolis. The second three, propose more urban futures, with plans that closely integrate the existing urban fabric. Of these, the designs by IBI Group and Moore Ruble Yudell/Ten Arquitectos/West 8 are most strong: They present the clearest visions for reconnecting the station, historic Plaza, and the Los Angeles River.

NBBJ / Ingenhoven Architects

NBBJ's vision is emblematic of the city's ambivalence towards urbanization. Like most of the others, it envisions a station concourse located over the existing platforms and capped by a green roof. A small cluster of high-rises around gateway plaza, and a few low buildings around the edge of the historic station, closely mirror earlier plans for the station developed by its previous owner. It carries forward the idea of the courtyard as the central element, and does create a large public space in front of the station, but the scale of these spaces seems too large to truly create engaging civic space. The broad, expansive public space created between the station and historic Plaza, seems reminiscent of modernist design ideas rather than transcendent and future-oriented. In the end, the design issues may stem from the underlying vision for the site as a new Garden City, which is based on a 19th century idea more closely associated with suburbanization than urban vitality; however, the scheme does respect the existing urban fabric, by presenting a station a greenspace that are woven into the street grid and proposed buildings.

Conclusion

NBBJ / Ingenhoven Architects



Renzo Piano Building Workshop and Parsons Transportation Group

Grimshaw/Gruen

Renzo Piano Building Workshop / Parsons Transportation Group Inc.

The scheme by Renzo Piano Building Workshop and Parsons Transportation Group presents a more dramatic mash-up of anti-urban ideals and dense development. It envisions an integrated high-rise city, which would be a counter point to the Bunker Hill skyline. It's difficult to imagine that this mega project would not face the same issues as does that 1960s redevelopment scheme. Like the redeveloped Bunker Hill, this vision for Union Station seems divorced from the existing urban context. Here Piano takes modernism's rejection of traditional urbanism one step further: rather than towers in the park, this vision presents towers as a park. While the concept of planted, hill-like roofs works beautifully in his design for San Francisco's new Academy of Science, which blends seamlessly into its context in Golden Gate Park, transplanted to Downtown Los Angeles it obscures its context. Like the others, this design preserves the landmark historic station building; however it destroys its surroundings. The station building is seemingly adrift in a sea of green, devoid of any connection to the historic patters which produced it, much like the Plaza Catholic Church in Allied Architects' 1924 vision for the Civic Center. Ultimately, this scheme is the apex of anti-urban visions for Los Angeles, which are rooted in the concept of the Garden City: here all aspects of urban life, from streets to buildings, are erased and subsumed in a massive super-structure cloaked in a pastoral veneer. In the end it may be the truest representation of twentieth century Los Angeles: a metropolis masquerading as the countryside.

Grimshaw / Gruen

While all of the designs imagine the Hollywood Freeway decked over to create park space, the scheme by Grimshaw and Gruen presents the most radical reimagination of the freeway corridor., creating a series of nearly-mile long buildings over the highway trench. Though dramatic, such a change would be disastrous for Downtown, transforming the existing cleavage into a dividing wall of development. One of the few positive elements of the existing freeway trench is that it does not block sight-lines, as

THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN STATION

EE&K in association with UNStudio

other mid-twentieth century urban freeway did in the downtowns of Boston and San Francisco. That benefit would be eliminated by this twenty-first century green monster, as would the historic value of the four-level interchange, an engineering landmark and a symbol of Los Angeles. A half century ago, a similar design for an integrated, linear highway/residential/office development was proposed across Lower Manhattan by Robert Moses, prompting Jane Jacobs' famous attack on city planning, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Since that time, New York, Boston, San Francisco and other cities have removed urban highways that divided neighborhoods with universal success. This scheme appears to have learned little from the last fifty years of city development.

EE&K in association with UNStudio

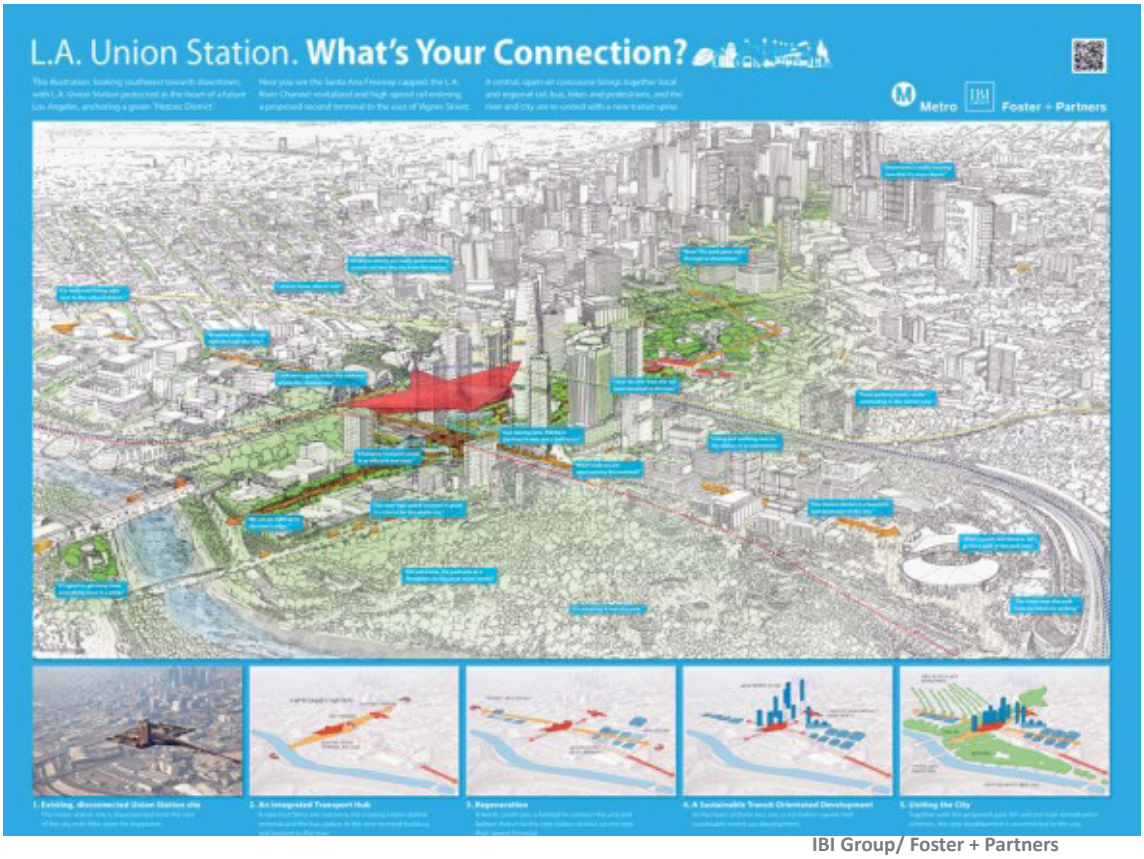
In contrast, the design by EE&K, is a contemporary vision for reviving an urban center. It is less exciting; from the station back, it closely resembles NBBJ's design and previous plans, though with less garden roof. While this scheme has a promising respect for the urban context, rather than trying to recreate the countryside, it ultimately ignores the city and falls flat. Though it offers a light and airy station concourse, where it comes short is in its lack of engagement with the are in front of the station and the historic Plaza. The existing station driveway and surface parking appear almost unaltered, while the area west of Alameda Street is not shown in the rendering. Ultimately this design fails to recognize and capitalize on the site's greatest assets: its proximity to the river and to the Plaza.

Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners/ Ten Arquitectos/West 8

Of the six visions, the design by Moore Ruble Yudell/Ten Arquitectos/West 8, is a most respectful of the urban context. It shows distributed density across the site, sloping down towards a widened and naturalized river. It presents the most interesting station concept, with a canopy designed like that of a forest. The result is a naturalistic, airy feeling. The vision's main shortcoming is the crudely-designed connection to the Plaza, which looks

THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN STATION

Moore Ruble Yudell/Ten Arquitectos/West 8



IBI Group/ Foster + Partners

like the wide boulevard proposed by Sumner Spaulding in 1939. Further refinement of this connection is needed, as a more thought about the design of the area in front of the station and the courtyard depicted in the upper right. The designers should have taken a lesson from the existing historic courtyards of the station and mixed in shade trees among the towering palms. Yet, this scheme understands the importance of the user experience better than most; in describing the "fragrance of orange trees and unmistakable light and warmth of Southern California," which will greet arriving passengers, it returns to the original vision for the station and the city as a "metropolis of sunlight and air"—an enduring vision which remains powerful.

IBI Group / Foster + Partners

It's difficult to compare the design by Moore Ruble Yudell/Ten Arquitectos/West 8, with that by IBI and Foster + Partners, which does not show detailed perspective views of the public spaces; however, IBI does offer the clearest design idea, focusing on the idea of connection. It succeeds by prioritizing the connection from the Plaza to the river and envisions a cross-axis, which addresses the missing connection to the area south of the freeway. It is unique in proposing that the high-speed rail station be physically separated from the existing station platforms, which would allow construction of the station with minimal impact on transit operations—an important practical consideration, which other visions, including the conceptual design presented in this thesis, do not address. Its weakness is in the architectural design of the high-speed rail station, shown in the center in red. While its peaked-roofs may have been intended to invoke the historic station building, the overall result more closely resembles a mid-century ski chalet. However, given the strength of the overall design and the clarity with which its concept for connections comes through, it has the potential to be an enduring vision for Downtown and inform the pattern of development for decades to come.

THE NEXT GREAT AMERICAN STATION

The central lesson of the six visions presented to Metro is the same one that a close reading of the existing urban form reveals: that visions and models of urban development can be enduring and powerful forces in shaping the future of cities. Nineteenth century concepts, such as the Garden City, as well as twentieth century models, such as of the Tower in the Park, and more recent ideas of city form, such as Landscape Urbanism, are all reflected in the vision plans presented for Union Station. Looking back, the visions that have been successful in creating vibrant urban places are those which respond to and reflect their context—recognizing and enhancing the existing strengths of the setting. This is the triumph of the original design for the existing Union Station; the Parkinsons' concept skillfully married the Los Angeles' romanticized Spanish colonial past with the city's ambition for the future in a design perfectly-adapted for the region's climate. The strength of the station as a symbol of the city's past and future potential, helped it to endure for over seventy years—a short period of time in most other cities, but nearly an eternity in fast-changing Los Angeles—and is part of why it was chosen as the site of the city's future high-speed rail terminal. While the six designs described above present divergent visions for Downtown Los Angeles in 2050, all preserve the historic station building as the centerpiece of their plans. This commonality reflects a consensus that, as this thesis argues, Union Station represents not just the past but the future of transportation in Los Angeles; in a city often described as having a love affair with the automobile, that simple idea has the potential to change everything.

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Appendix
Theoretical Context

Looking at how historians, journalists, sociologists, writers and urbanists have attempted to understand the fantastic development of the city through the twentieth century, this section establishes a theoretical context for studying Los Angeles.

Los Angeles has long been the subject of study for academics and social observers. The first were outsiders, attempting to explain the phenomenon of Los Angeles—that an unimportant pueblo on the edge of the desert, in region with seemly no natural advantages other than its climate, somehow grew into the nation's second largest city in less than a century. Carey McWilliams and Robert Fogelson are the most important observers of this genre, both of whom focused on the growth of the city prior to the Second World War. A second literary trend emerged in the 1960s, seeking to understand not how the city had come to be but rather what it meant: focusing not on the place but on its people and their everyday experiences. For these writers, whose ranks include Reyner Banham and Joan Didion, the freeways offered the best glimpse into the city's psyche. By the 1990s, the focus shifted to the social implications of Los Angeles's decentralized development. This school of Los Angeles scholars presents a darker, more pessimistic view of the city defined not by mobility but by those left behind and the ensuing class and racial tensions. Mike Davis, who classified visions of Los Angeles as either sunshine or noir, fits squarely in the latter school of thought; he was among the first to seriously question how the forces of capital were reshaping the city. Along with Davis, Eric Avila, William Estrada and John Arroyo argue that the power structures of the city are not only reflected, but are reinforced through the built environment. This chapter examines the works of these writers.

Seeking the Origins of Los Angeles
Carey McWilliams and Robert Fogelson

Carey McWilliams was not the first person to ask how a metropolis grew out of the dry, sunbaked soil south of the Tehachapis; however, he is the first to offer a satisfying answer. His superb history of the city, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (1946), demystifies the development of the Los Angeles. McWilliams presents Los Angeles not as the "City that Grew," as local historian Boyle Workman described it, but as a place that was "conjured into existence:" more the product of advertising than of any organic process.[1] McWilliams arrived in Los Angeles from Colorado in 1920s, just as the city was experiencing its first great boom.[2] As an outsider and a journalist, he was sufficiently removed from the frenzy that had engulfed the region to see clearly the mechanisms that were driving the madcap growth of Los Angeles. In Southern California, McWilliams strips away the artifice of the southland's romanticized mission past, the "folklore of climatology," and the glamor of Hollywood to reveal the forces and ideas the drove the development of the city. Though it was written over a half century ago, most of McWilliams' observations ring true today. Though generally comprehensive, McWilliams is strangely silent on such topics as the historic plaza and efforts to remake it into a tourist attraction. While nearly the entire work is devoted to laying bare the legends and myths that pass for history in that region, in the end McWilliams embraces them, concluding: "Here America will build its great city of the Pacific, the most fantastic city in the world…Nowadays one can see that the Spaniards were right after all and that we, in our technological conceit, were wrong. For with its planes whirling out over the Pacific towards China and India, California is, indeed, 'at the right hand of the Indies,' and, in Southern California, it does have a Terrestrial Paradise, and Amazon Island, abounding in gold and certainly 'infested with many griffins.'"[3]

Robert Fogelson, an historian by training rather than a journalist, avoids developing the infatuation with Los Angeles that eventually enveloped McWilliams, who became in his own words

1 McWilliams, *Southern California*, 128, 134.
2 Peter Richardson, "Carey McWilliams: The California Years."
3 McWilliams, *Southern California*, 377–8.

"as devoted to the region as a native son."[4] Whereas, McWilliams focused on the myths that made Los Angeles, the central thread of Fogelson's narrative is the tension between centralized and decentralized development: in his view, the L.A. story is that of "the emergence of a populous, urbanized and industrialized settlement," contrasted with "the rejection of the metropolis in favor of its suburbs." Fogelson's narrative is the theoretical foundation for this work: the second chapter picks up where he left off, in the 1930s, and carries the story forward through the twentieth century, while the body of this thesis seeks to project how this tension will play out in the twenty-first century.

Searching for 'Los Angeles' in the Freeway Age
Reyner Banham and Joan Didion

Both McWilliams and Fogelson believed that Los Angeles was a new type of city, but they only hinted at the implications of its sprawling development. By the mid-twentieth century, their premise was generally accepted, and a new generation of writers sought to understand not why the city came into existence but rather what it meant. Reyner Banham, author of Los Angeles: *The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (1971), is part of this group, which focused on the role of automobility in defining and shaping the region. Banhnam observes Los Angeles after both another boom, following the Second World War when the region's defense industry took off, and a spectacular bust: the Watts Riots, which brought about a period of introspective self-reflection in the city. Like McWilliams, Banham is an outsider, who none-the-less succeeded in immersing himself in the city—learning to drive so that he could "read Los Angeles in the original."[5] Just as McWilliams, Banham is ultimately seduced by the splendor of mid-century Los Angeles despite his criticisms of the city. He too portrays Los Angeles as an instant city—but one which might have been unrecognizable to McWilliams. In 1946, when Southern California was published, the freeway was a new idea, and one still tethered to the founding myths that McWilliams explored: the opening of the Arroyo Seco Parkway, the forerunner of the modern freeway system, was celebrated with "the beating of tribal drums," and a ceremony in

4 McWilliams quoted in Christopher Hawthorne, "Reading L.A."
5 Banham, *Los Angeles*, 23.

which "Chief Tahachwee relinquished the rights of his people in the Arroyo and formally transferred the property to the State," according to a California Department of Highways and Public Works publication at the time.[6] By the end of the 1960s, freeways had become not only a ubiquitous part of the Los Angeles landscape, but also a symbol for independence and mobility, which Banham views as the defining characteristics of the city. He presents the freeways system as "a single comprehensible place, a coherent state of mind, a complete way of life, the forth [and final] ecology of the Angeleno."[7] Banham become completely enamored with the freeways, and describes Angelenos as equally enthralled with their seemingly limit-less possibilities, which raises the question of his work's applicability to the city today, which is slowly but surely moving away from its famed "love-affair" with the automobile. Ultimately, Banham's Los Angeles is like Casablanca, and so many classic Hollywood movies, whose most famous lines are so oft repeated as to make their original dialog sound clichéd to the contemporary audience.

Banham is not alone in his view that mobility is the defining characteristic of the city: many contemporary writers expressed this idea. Joan Didion, another deity in the pantheon of Southern California literary figures, describes the freeways as "the only secular communion that Los Angeles has." Writing in *Fortune* in 1965, Richard Austin Smith concluded, "Whatever glass and steel monuments may be built downtown, the essence of Los Angeles, its true identifying characteristic, is mobility. Freedom of movement has long given life a special flavor there, liberated the individual to enjoy the sun and space that his environment so abundantly offered, put the manifold advantages of a great metropolitan area within his grasp."

This 'sunshine' view of Los Angeles is sharply contrasted with that of Mike Davis, who presents his critique of the city in a series of works including *Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control, The Ecology of Fear* (1992), *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (1990, 2006), and *Dead Cities, And Other Tales* (2003). Davis presents a primarily dystopian view of the city Los Angeles had become at the end of the twentieth century, in

6 California Department of Highways and Public Works quoted in Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 202.
7 Banham, *Los Angeles*, 213.

which public space has been eradicated and the urban landscape has been remade to prioritize the defense the elites against the social underclasses.

Contemporary Hispanic Angelenos Describe their City
Eric Avila, William Estrada and John Arroyo

Davis's commentary on Los Angeles is derived primarily from his neo-Marxist ideology rather than from a careful reading of the built environment of Los Angeles. As a result, it leaves many recent Los Angeles phenomena unexplained, as they do not fit his pre-established narrative. Similar criticism is leveled by Edward Soja, who writes "postmodern epistemological critique[s] of modernism [are] locked into 'master narratives' and 'totalizing discourses' that limit the scope of knowledge formation [and] has created deep divisions."[8] Not surprisingly, Davis has been eclipsed by recent writers not bound by his worldview. More recent scholars of Los Angeles, such as Eric Avila, William Estrada and John Arroyo continue to focus on race and class divisions within the city; like Davis they all present Los Angeles as a city in which power structures are not only reflected, but are reinforced through the built environment and public realm; however, they generally avoid his neo-Marxist overtones.

Eric Avila, the first of a new era of Southern-California born Latino social critics, self-styled himself as following "[i]n the tradition of Carrey McWilliams and Mike Davis;" however, he differs in that he shares neither McWilliams's boosterism nor Davis' pessimism towards Los Angeles. Like Fogelson, Avila's narrative centers around the tension between the urban center and surrounding suburbs of Los Angeles; however, Avila presents this conflict as the spatial manifestation of deep-seated racial tensions. He argues,

> Postwar suburbanization sanctioned the formulation if a new racial geography that spatialized a starker contrast between white and black…The collusion of public policy and private practices enforced a spatial distinction between 'black' cities and 'white' suburbs and gave shape to what the Kerner Commission…identified as 'two societies, one black,

8 Soja, *Thirdspace*, 3.

one white—separate and unequal."[9]

In his view, the redevelopment of Bunker Hill in the 1960s was less an attempt to revive falling land values in the center city, but rather part of a larger, city-wide trend to suburbanize—that is to sanitize of racial diversity—urban areas that were perceived as threats by the white majority.[10]

However, Avila approaches the subject of suburban exclusion and white flight as historical phenomena, one which no longer dominate the narrative of contemporary Los Angeles. Writing a decade after the city was torn-apart by racially motivated rioting for the second time (following the acquittal four Los Angeles police officers for the alleged beating of black motorist Rodney King, in 1992), Avila presents a city reclaiming its diversity and streetlife. He writes, "[historically white-dominated] Westside communities are taking their cue from their [historically Latino] Eastside counterparts and learning to enjoy the pleasures of street life." His conclusion that demographic changes (which have made Los Angeles a predominately Latino city and California the first large minority-majority state), are altering perceptions of public space, forms part of the premise for this work which seeks to extrapolate a vision of the future from existing trends.[11]

William Estrada, a native of East Los Angeles, takes a similar perspective in his history of the Plaza, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (2008). Following Soja, Estarada focuses on what he calls "the quintessential thirdspace," to unpack the history of the city.[12] His is the most comprehensive history of the historic Pueblo area; however it also speaks to history of the region as a whole. Like Avila, Estrada's narrative centers on ethnic tensions, as the city attempts to balance its Mexican and Anglo heritage, though his geographic focus is different. Whereas Avila examined the spatial manifestations of cultural identities across the region—studying how Anglo culture developed new physical forms outside of the urban center; Estrada studies how multiple cultural identities have been mapped onto a single place: the Los

9 The Kerner Commission was a presidential commission convened to assess the causes of the urban riots during the 1960s, including the 1965 Watts Riots in South Central Los Angeles. Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 4–5.

10 Ibid., 60.

11 Hajnal, "Common Ground: Enter the Majority-Minority State"; Associated Press, "Minority Population Surging in Texas"; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 230–1.

12 Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza*, 9.

Angeles Plaza.

Estrada sees an emerging tension in the twenty-first century: an increased desire for community frustrated by a lack of public space within the city. He writes,

> As we enter the twenty-first century, we are a society that is seeking connection—with our history, our ethnicity, our environment, and each other. Urban parks and plazas are some of the few venues where a pure expression of this connection is possible. However, Los Angeles is becoming less public. The rise of corporate Bunker Hill, the renovation of Pershing Square and later development schemes serve as the most recent examples of this trend to 'kill the street,' thereby contributing to the eroding of public space.[13]

In his view, recent projects such as Eli Broad's proposed Grand Avenue Project and Phillip Anshutz's L.A. Live entertainment complex, are not true public spaces but rather a continuation of the pattern of defensible urban centers which Davis exposed. Yet Estrada, like Avila, finds optimism in the demographic changes and recent community-lead efforts to create public space. He concludes that the Plaza will continue to grow in cultural significance, not only for Latinos but for all ethnic groups as the Plaza's multi-cultural past is revived.[14]

John Arroyo, like Estrada a native Angeleno, offers the most recent study of public space in Los Angeles, in the form of his 2011 master's thesis, Culture in Concrete: Civic Space in Los Angeles. Using the concept of civic space to critique recent Downtown revitalization efforts and study the use of the Los Angeles River by various communities, he argues, "[Los Angeles] forgot about the importance of civic space as it suburbanized," but that the River, largely-forgotten by the city, has taken on the characteristics of civic space as it has been appropriated by artists.[15] As with, Davis and Avila, he sees class and ethnic divisions as the primary driver of the spatial organization of the city; however, his assertion that "the affluent and dominant class does not need or want civic space," is not well-founded.[16] Like

13 Ibid., 264–5.
14 Ibid., 259–70.
15 John Arroyo, "Culture in Concrete" 148.
16 Ibid., 154.

Estrada, he rejects the recent Downtown revitalization efforts of the Grand Avenue Project and Park101, as "pretenders of civic space." In contrast he presents the Los Angeles River as "civic space in its truest form," because "[i]t was not created for the affluent, elite or by for-profit interests," implying that civic space must be generated from a bottom-up, non-profit process.[17]

Arroyo demonstrates that conventional wisdom about Los Angeles dies hard. His claim that the affluent do not want civic space, echoes Rowan, Banham and other mid-century critics who argued that Angelenos do not care about public space. This work challenges that contention, and Arroyo's idea that civic space cannot be produced by formalized, for-profit efforts. The development of the publicly-owned Los Angeles Union Station site offers the ideal opportunity to explore how public-private partnerships, and government-led planning efforts in collaboration with community groups, can produce high quality, civic space.

Exploring the Public Realm

Theories of Public Space

What makes good public space? Why do some city centers thrive and others falter? How can we design transit stations, streets and public parks to foster civic life and urban vitality? These questions, which are at the heart of this thesis, have been explored by designers, architects and social theorists throughout the second half of the twentieth century. One approach is taken by designers and planners, who tend to evaluate public space using practical performance metrics. This can be done at both the macro city scale and micro space scale. Kevin Lynch focuses on the former, studying how the elements of the public realm contribute to the identity, structure and meaning of a city, which together he refers to as the "image" of the city. At the other end of the scale, designers such as William Whyte and Jan Gehl examine how public spaces serve people. A different approach is taken by urban anthropologists and sociologists such as Peter Rowe and Edward Soja, who focus on the conceptual, rather than physical, elements of the public realm. Both approaches have influenced this work.

17 Ibid., 192.

In his 1960 book, *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch considers the visual quality of American cities, focusing on what he calls the legibility and imageability of the cityscape. Legibility, Lynch writes, is "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern," which is part of what evokes the image of the city. His approach, which looks at five elements of the urban form, provides a framework for evaluating the quality of the urban form. Mapping the paths, nodes, edges, districts and landmarks of the city became part of this study of Los Angeles, New York and London.

Writer and urbanist William Whyte, was among the first to focus on how public spaces preform for people. Using the observation of public spaces in use as his primary methodology, he created a set of simple principles for the design of public space, which were codified into New York City's planning process for privately-owned public spaces. His 1980 book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, derived from study of public spaces in New York City, offers clear guidance for designers of public plazas. While he goes so far as to suggest the proper dimensions for benches and seat ledges, he contributes to the theory of public space, writing:

> What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people… If there's a lesson in streetwatching it is that people do like basics — and as environments go, a street that is open to the sky and filled with people and life is a splendid place to be… The street is the river of life of the city, the place where we come together, the pathway to the center.

His study of corporate structure, which he developed into his book *The Organization Man* (1956), also provides a useful theory for the urban designer. Whyte writes: "We are not hapless beings caught in the grip of forces we can do little about, and wholesale damnations of our society only lend a further mystique to organization. Organization has been made by man; it can be changed by man;" by substituting 'cities' for 'organizations,' his words become a manifesto for planners. Whyte's lessons on public places, and his belief in the ability of design to influence the experience of the city, are imbued in this work.

The non-profit Project for Public Spaces (PPS), founded in 1975 by one of Whyte's research assistants Fred Kent, has expounded

on Whyte's work. The organization's design philosophy is summarized in its Ten Principles for Successful Squares, which argues that designers of civic space must consider the following elements:

1. Image and Identity
2. Attractions and Destinations
3. Amenities
4. Flexible Design
5. Seasonal Strategy
6. Access
7. The Inner and Outer Square
8. Reaching Out Like an Octopus
9. The Central Role of Management
10. Diverse Funding Sources

Like Whyte's writing, the Project for Public Spaces and its principles has similarly influenced the direction of this thesis.

Additionally, Peter Rowe's 1999 examination of the public realm, *Civic Realism*, contributed to the theoretical approach taken here. His study, focusing on spaces which he writes "belong to everyone yet no one in particular," concluded with five balancing tests for defining and creating civic space. He writes, civic space should:

1. Collaborate with broad and varying perspectives
2. Challenge established order, but express common accord
3. Reflect changing aspects of society, but offer something permanent in common
4. Maintain a concern for everyday life and its depiction for change and advancement of certain modes of expression
5. Provide spaces for communal activities, while maintaining spaces for individuals

Together with Lynch's work and Whyte's writings, Rowe's concept of civic space provided a lens through which this study has examined the existing urban form and considered its future.