

The Unintended Inevitable: How Housing Fell through the Cracks in Venice Beach's Transition to
Community Planning, and What It Might Take to Build an Imagination for the Future

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ABSTRACT

Today, U.S. cities large and small are grappling with housing shortages and pressure from property owners to limit development and adopt policies allowing few to no changes in their neighborhoods. Studies showing the disproportionate impact property owners have on local housing policies also provide evidence that these influences have severely impeded housing production over time. Unless changes are made, they will continue to do so, leaving an increasing number of U.S. cities with a worsening housing shortage.

This thesis studies the community planning that took place in Venice in the late 1960s and early 1970s, reflecting the deleterious effects of a hyper-local planning focus on both current and future residents. Using archival research methods and a liberatory memory framework, I attempted to trace the dynamics underlying and surfacing during Venice Beach's community planning process in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when concerns about unregulated development and a community planning process deemed inadequate by almost all stakeholders shaped a community plan allowing little growth or change. A set of secondary sources informed my understanding of the agency community groups and leaders believed they had to influence this community planning process and track the cumulative effects of local municipalities enacting slow growth land use policy. This analysis showed that traditional planning processes, many of which have been in use for decades, privilege the sentiments of socially and economically dominant community voices. A regional approach to housing production can address the inequities produced by this dynamic — by widening our lens to think about what happens when most neighborhoods or cities in a region reject new housing production, issues with parochial planning are exposed. Efforts to set regional goals for housing and a regulatory structure to ensure those within a region contribute to it offer path toward addressing housing shortages. However, as we widen that lens beyond the loudest voices in the room, I believe we need to be vigilant not to lose the voices of the communities that have historically been marginalized by these processes and who resist oppression and plan for the future on their own terms.

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I. Introduction

“If it is truly the desire of the City Planning Department to provide a plan [to] ‘transform (Venice) from a partially blighted area to a ‘model’ beach-oriented community comprising a diversity of ethnic groups, incomes, life-styles and physical surroundings’ (p. GP-8), it will not be accomplished with this plan.”¹

In providing a response to the 1970 Venice Community Plan, the Venice Community Improvement Union (VCIU) underlined the stakes of the series of the community plans being shaped for neighborhoods across Los Angeles: you will not achieve the goals of this plan without us. Initially started as a grassroots organization in 1965, the VCIU advocated for Venice’s low-income residents on issues of urban renewal and code enforcement. Geographically, the organization focused many of its advocacy efforts on a neighborhood within Venice called Oakwood, where African American residents lived in part because of racialized housing covenants preventing them from living elsewhere during the city’s early history. Citing “increasing evidence throughout the country,” the VCIU’s response to the city-backed community plan asserted the primacy of “the people” in all efforts involving the community’s future: “Probably the key question is: ‘Why can’t a plan which truly recognizes the specific concerns of the resident community and development interests be produced?’ There is increasing evidence throughout the country that planners, politicians, and developers must develop a new sensitivity to the concerns of the people as well as to the problem of pollution, beautification, and all of the other aspects of our environment.”

In the report the VCIU hired planning consultants The Urban Concern to draft, the VCIU showed it understood it could draw from a shift in city planning modes toward community-based plans to advocate for low-income residents concerned about the threat of displacement under new development schemes. The community planning discussions taking shape in Venice in the late 1960s followed years of debate about whether the oceanfront neighborhood sandwiched between Santa Monica to the north and Marina del Rey to the south would accept urban renewal. With some citing fears of displacement and loss of community identity should the large-scale demolition and public housing development associated with urban renewal take shape in Venice, the Venice Urban Renewal Advisory Committee opted to reject Los Angeles’ proposal to site urban renewal projects there in 1958. The code enforcement program, community planning efforts, and subsequent specific planning and community plan restudy efforts to follow this rejection of urban renewal would make their marks on Venice’s trajectory toward continued gentrification in the 1970s and beyond.

This thesis is focused on the dynamics underlying and surfacing during Venice Beach’s community planning process in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when concerns about unregulated development and a community planning process deemed inadequate by almost all stakeholders shaped a community plan allowing little growth or change. This would ultimately stifle the community’s ability to house existing residents while also incorporating the newcomers who would inevitably move there. In this thesis, I hope to explore the what I have come to call the “unintended inevitable,” which occurs when the current demands of planning processes help produce some of the very outcomes they are meant to eliminate and mitigate in the future. As the VCIU leadership called for development regulation to stop displacement of current residents, could they have envisioned the limitations on housing supply these measures might place as Venice’s

¹ The Urban Concern. Report prepared for the Venice Community Improvement Union. 17 Feb. 1970. D-0416. Marvin Braude Records. Los Angeles City Archives, Los Angeles, CA. 19 Aug. 2021.

population increased over time? Did the property owners organizations concerned about Venice's more run-down housing stock realize that by running a code enforcement campaign to demolish them, home prices would not just increase, but do so in multiples? Did those concerned about Venice outsiders crowding the beach realize that opting against beachfront shuttles would likely not stem beach demand?

Taken together, the calls for development regulation and slow growth came from a wide swath of community groups and individuals organized in Venice along different issues, from protection of property values to the preservation of low-income housing. This is not unlike what one might witness in public planning meetings in or near American urban centers today, where property owners largely exercise the most influence in opposing new development near their homes, and are sometimes joined by groups concerned about a development's potential to displace lower-income residents. In the end, the approved 1970 Venice Community Plan envisioned few major changes for the beachside neighborhood: "The plan proposes relatively few changes in densities from those permitted by the residential zoning applicable to Venice at the time of plan adoption. The amount of multiple family zoning is ample for future needs."² The only part of Venice where the "long existing limitations on density are now inappropriate" was the Venice Canal area, where zoning was made more restrictive "due to the difficulties involved in providing wider streets and acceptable levels of other public services." From the baseline 40,300 population estimated for Venice in a proposed plan dated 1968,³ the adopted plan zoning provided for a maximum population of 82,000 in 1990. By 1990, the population in the Venice Community Plan Area would only reach 40,040.⁴

Today, U.S. cities large and small are grappling with housing shortages and pressure from property owners to limit development and adopt policies allowing few to no changes for their neighborhoods. Studies showing the disproportionate impact property owners have on local housing policies also provide evidence that these influences have severely impeded housing production over time. They will continue to do so, leaving an increasing number of U.S. cities with a housing shortage that is only worsening.

This study of the community planning that took place in Venice more than five decades ago reflects the deleterious effects of a hyper-local planning focus on both current and future residents. Traditional planning processes, many of which have been in use for decades, privilege the sentiments of socially and economically dominant community voices. A regional approach to housing production can address the inequities produced by this dynamic — by widening our lens to think about what happens when most neighborhoods or cities in a region reject new housing production, issues with parochial planning are exposed. Efforts to set regional goals for housing and a regulatory structure to ensure those within a region contribute to it offer path toward addressing housing shortages. However, as we widen that lens beyond the loudest voices in the room, I believe we need to be vigilant not to lose the voices of the communities that have historically been marginalized by these processes. Advocacy organizations and service providers mobilized in Venice to push for low-income housing, parks, and other resources to serve the minoritized communities during this period. The way they planned for the future and resisted the oppressive planning institutions that had previously ignored them opens a world of knowledge vital to more inclusive

² Los Angeles City Planning Department. Venice Community Plan. 14 Oct. 1970. UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 4181, Folder 16 (Venice 10-14-70 1970-1991: Plans, Amendments re Venice Community Plan, a Part of The General Plan of The City of LA).

³ *Venice Community Plan Study*. plan study, CPC 14311, City of Los Angeles, July 1968. Huntington Library Archives, Southern California Regional Planning Collection.

⁴ Rodman-Alvarez, Dario. U.S. Census Bureau Data Trends 1960-2010. Pacific Urbanism, 13 Sept. 2021, <https://www.pacificurbanism.com/research-publications/veniceneighborhoodcouncilandusezoning>.

planning futures. The perspectives of minoritized communities must feature prominently in any regional approach to housing production that is used. It is the responsibility of planners to educate themselves on the language these communities use to plan for their futures and advocate for themselves, and to understand the affective impact of planning on these groups' connection to place and the social networks associated with it.

The archival records I was able to review exemplify many of the political and socioeconomic realities described and documented in the secondary sources I consulted as part of this research project. Among them are the letters from property owners asking city officials to continue a code enforcement program, a newspaper publication whose charge was to elevate the voices of Venice's Black community and tell the truth about city-backed policies, land use policy advocacy by a newspaper manager, and alternate plans drawn by a community planner. Where these perspectives converged and diverged reveals the tension in this argument both for a regional perspective on housing production and also for a foregrounding of the lived experiences of marginalized communities.

To frame my understanding of the agency community groups and leaders believed they had to influence this community planning process and track the cumulative effects of local municipalities enacting slow growth land use policy, I consulted several secondary sources, which are described in Section II. In Section III, I outline the methodology by which I consulted and made meaning of archival records managed by the Los Angeles city government and public and private universities in Southern California. Section IV documents the meaning I made of six records from this period of Venice Beach's history. Each record is contextualized with its place of origin and the motivations that could have impacted its existence as an attempt to elevate the ways in which community archives counter interlocking layers of oppression such as white supremacy and the patriarchy. Section V concludes this project with a call to planners to consider different scales of the future as well as the many layers of impact these decisions have on minoritized communities.

II. A Brief Venice History and Secondary Sources Informing Archival Analysis

In this section, I will provide a snapshot of Venice Beach's early history and significant steps the Los Angeles City Planning Department took in the years leading up to the community planning process that took shape in the late 1960s. To follow this, the secondary sources I relied on to corroborate and generalize the archival records implicated in this thesis are outlined. These sources serve as the framework I used to make meaning of these archival records, specifically to understand how community organizations and leaders conceptualized their agency, the cumulative effects of restrictive housing policies popular among California municipalities, the racialized and classist dynamics undergirding local land use policy, and the planning landscape of Los Angeles during this time period.

Venice Beach's Early History and Relationship with the Los Angeles Planning Department

The community planning discussions taking shape in Venice in the late 1960s followed years of debate about the neighborhood's identity and positionality in reference to the City of Los Angeles ever since it was incorporated as a city in 1905. Originally home to the Kizh, Tongva and Chumash nations, the land that would become Venice Beach was named of Rancho La Ballona and used for cattle grazing under Spanish colonization.⁵ The city was largely started in 1905 under millionaire Abbot Kinney's vision to recreate a cultural hub similar to Venice, Italy. Kinney chose the marshy land on Los Angeles' west side, just south of Santa Monica and north of what would become Marina Del Rey, and hired crews to fashion canals out of the marsh as well as a pier protruding from the beach that would become an amusement hub drawing crowds until its closure in the 1940s.⁶ When Kinney died in 1920, the city lost its leadership and held a vote to be annexed to Los Angeles, which won narrow approval by those interested in increased property values and better city services as part of the growing metropolis.⁷ These debates about whether Venice should have remained as an independent entity would continue to surface throughout the neighborhood's history, with talks of secession from Los Angeles as recent as 2018. Venice's shoreline rapidly declined in the late 1920s and 1930s when oil drilling proliferated there. Though drilling would subside in the 1940s and ultimately be banned in the 1960s, the oil derricks filling the Venice shoreline left an imprint.⁸

Venice has embodied many identities throughout its incorporated history. At different times, it has been an entertainment hub (through the 1940s), an enclave for beatniks and creatives (in the 1950s), and gathering place for anti-war protests (1960s and 1970s), besides serving other roles. The community planning unfolding in Venice in the late 1960s was shaped by all of these dynamics, and marked a new chapter in the attention Los Angeles' City Planning Department paid to the seaside town. Leading up to the effort to do neighborhood-by-neighborhood planning, the department proposed an urban renewal district in Venice, which was soundly rejected in 1958 by a committee

⁵ Umemoto, Karen Nora. *You Don't See What I See: Multiple Publics and Public Policy in a Los Angeles Gang War*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1998. *ProQuest*, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/304474618/97AF36F8D7B04280PQ/1>.

⁶ Carr, Harry C. "DREAM AND DISAPPOINTMENT AND HOPE OF VENETIAN DOGE.: Abbot Kinney, Builder of the Ideal City Unrealized, Tells Its Story and His Future Plans. HIS MAGNUS OPUS. HIS MAGNUS OPUS." *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)*, 17 Mar. 1907, p. NaN-NaN.

⁷ "Times" Staff. "VENICE VOTES ANNEXATION TO CITY OF LOS ANGELES: Majority 915 in Heavy Ballot; 25,000 Residents and Valuable Territory for Metropolis VENICE VOTES TO BE ANNEXED." *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, 3 Oct. 1925, pp. 1-2.

⁸ Los Angeles Planning Commission. *Recommendation of Hearing Examiner*. Los Angeles Planning Commission, 23 June 1966. Los Angeles City Archive, Box D439.

formed to debate the issue.⁹ Concerns about the effects of large-scale development in Venice fueled support for code enforcement as an alternative to urban renewal. Initially designed to unfold over five geographic areas in Venice, the code enforcement program began in the early 1960s and entailed building inspectors visiting homes and businesses to identify code violations and required improvements that property owners were obligated to make.¹⁰ This effort would demolish 488 structures and likely displace hundreds of low-income residents who could not afford to make the required improvements to their homes and were forced to move to another location.¹¹

In the late-1960s, Los Angeles embarked on a community planning process in response to the rejection of urban renewal in communities like Venice Beach. Planners and the elected officials campaigning to introduce this “ground-up” approach focused their attention on each of the 35 community planning areas across the 2.8 million-person city, of which Venice Beach was one.¹² When the city’s community planning effort began in Venice, community organizations like the VCIU and property owners associations such as the Venice Property Owners Association had already mobilized to form perspectives about the code enforcement program. For property owners associations, the promise of increased property values under the “clean-up” and “upgrades” associated with code enforcement was worth fighting for. For the VCIU, this focus on increasing property values and the pressure that the code enforcement campaign, together with new developments, put on low-income residents in Venice fueled their advocacy for low-income housing. The Venice Coalition, a collection of 37 agencies and organizations serving the Venice community, penned a joint letter in 1969 asking for a delay of the planning process so an alternate plan could be drafted.¹³ Even after the 1970 Venice Community Plan was adopted, community-based efforts to shape official city plan documents continued to develop. Led by community planner Ken Norwood, the Venice Community Design Center was formed to bring professional planners and architects in conversation with community advocates. The Venice CDC would dissolve soon after its start due to lack of funding from UCLA and skepticism about Norwood’s fitness to lead this effort.¹⁴

Secondary Sources Informing Archival Analysis

By reading *New York Times* reporter Conor Dougherty’s *Golden Gates: Fighting for Housing in America*,¹⁵ I could start to build a framework for understanding the escalating set of housing shortages that have plagued California for decades. Taking account of the human and cumulative impact of local housing decisions as well as the interaction between them and state and federal housing policy, Dougherty’s book describes the factors exacerbating the state’s housing shortage. To illustrate the depths of the shortage and corresponding housing unaffordability, Dougherty recounts

⁹ “Venice Plans Its Own Rehabilitation Program.” *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, 30 Mar. 1958, p. WS8.

¹⁰ “Venice Community Moving Forward In Spite of Controversial Issues.” *Evening Vanguard*, 7 Oct. 1963. newspapers.com.

¹¹ Haydon, Brownlee. *The Venice Area Needs Your Help*. Venice Area Vocational Training Corporation. USC Libraries Special Collections, Box 332, Folder 40. Accessed 30 Mar. 2022.

¹² Morrow, Greg. *The Homeowner Revolution: Democracy, Land Use and the Los Angeles Slow-Growth Movement, 1965--1992*. University of California, Los Angeles, 2013. [mit.primo.exlibrisgroup.com, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1466613838?pq-origsite=primo](https://search.proquest.com/docview/1466613838?pq-origsite=primo).

¹³ The Venice Coalition. *Letter from The Venice Coalition Requesting More Time Be Granted before Deciding on the Venice Community Plan*. 16 Sept. 1969. Los Angeles City Archive, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center, Box D-0416, Venice Master Plan (69-70).

¹⁴ Davidson, Rick. *Letter from Rick Davidson to Rex Lotery Regarding the Possibility of a Venice Community Design Center*. 13 Nov. 1973. Special Collections & University Archives, California State University, Long Beach, Box 19, Venice Collection, Community Design Center (CDC).

¹⁵ Dougherty, Conor. *Golden Gates: Fighting for Housing in America*. Penguin, 2020.

stories such as that of a 15-year-old high school student who protests rent increases in her neighborhood of North Fair Oaks, an unincorporated portion of San Mateo County (Dougherty 45-46). Despite receiving local press coverage of the student effort to resist displacement of low-income families like hers, the teen's family is ultimately forced to move to a smaller apartment in neighboring Redwood City while their neighbors move to cities much farther away (Dougherty 60-61).

In a forensic effort to identify how the housing crisis came to afflict much of California, Dougherty follows the trajectories of Gov. "Pat" Brown and his son, Gov. Jerry Brown. He also situates the state's current housing shortage in past government involvement with slum clearance in urban neighborhoods, financial backing for white families to move to the suburbs, legislative efforts to stop racial integration, and the rise in environmental review of new developments and anti-tax sentiment after years of growth. Dougherty outlines the Browns' approach to the government's response to population growth in California, housing shortages and racial segregation as well as their responses to a wave of environmentalism. This movement manifests itself in some ways as anti-growth sentiments and the fight to stop state property tax increases.

As district attorney of San Francisco following World War II, "Pat" Brown lobbied for a state public housing program to address the ills of overcrowding and negligent landlords. When he was elected governor, "Pat" Brown would promote population growth in the state and pursued infrastructure and social projects to support it, such as major water supply systems and the expansion of public universities. As a legislative effort to ban racial discrimination in housing was appealed and resistance grew to major freeway infrastructure projects in San Francisco and elsewhere, Brown's son Jerry took office and faced price inflation across many sectors, particularly in gas prices and home sales. Real estate came to constitute a larger and larger share of household wealth, and more and more suburbs took up growth moratoriums to preserve home values for owners. In his first two terms as governor from 1975 to 1983, Jerry Brown grappled with the push to protect the environment from sprawl as well as the pull toward addressing the state's rising home prices, signing bills in his second term to expedite housing development.

Though it may not seem obvious, the rise in the number of young people yelling at Bay Area public meetings for more housing in 2014 is one extension of the restrictive housing regulations California suburbs were just starting to embrace some 50 years earlier. After setting the stage for the economic and policy landscape for California's housing shortage and suburban anti-growth sentiments, Dougherty outlines the dynamics that multiplied the Bay Area's challenges with housing availability and affordability. As the strict land use regulations California suburbs were starting to embrace in the 1960s remained entrenched and gained favor with surrounding communities, the Bay Area underwent several other changes that only exacerbated the gap between housing demand and supply, namely the boom in technology companies there. Together with hesitance among developers to build only if high-end rents could be secured, the sum total of high rents and home prices catalyzed a movement among younger people, self-described YIMBYs, eager to take down barriers to the region's housing supply.

Dougherty documents in detail the conflicts between YIMBYs and NIMBYs at local governments across the Bay Area and the political machinations of YIMBYs who aspired to political office. But his profile-based analysis stopped short of unpacking the dynamics underlying public meetings where housing decisions are negotiated, leaving open questions of who feels empowered enough to voice their opinions at these forums, how they conceive of their agency in these settings, and how efforts to implement a more participatory form of democracy in recent decades may have in fact entrenched the status quo. Where Dougherty attempts to assess the cumulative effect of countless local housing decisions over decades in California history, Katherine Einstein, David M. Glick, and Maxwell Palmer in their book *Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America's*

*Housing Crisis*¹⁶ identify property owners as among the most influential players in hearings where decisions on individual housing developments are made. Einstein and her co-authors provide important insights into how these individuals make the transition from property owners to defenders of their neighborhoods.

In tracing the participatory politics of housing, Einstein, et al, apply political science concepts to participation in local government. Starting from the destructive consequences of urban renewal programs for urban neighborhoods across the United States, Einstein and her co-authors illustrate how governments at all levels have placed greater emphasis on participatory institutions at the neighborhood level since the 1960s (Einstein et al., 29-30). Democratic theorists have outlined the merits of neighborhood participation for serving as a check against private interests given that government is constrained by the need to promote investment activity (Einstein et al., 31). In his Ph.D. dissertation *The Homeowner Revolution: Democracy, Land Use and the Los Angeles Slow-Growth Movement, 1965-1992*,¹⁷ Professor Greg Morrow illustrates the impact of this shift toward participatory planning processes in Los Angeles in the years following 1970. Morrow argues that the introduction of bottom-up planning with grassroots organizations in the 1960s would empower local groups and in particular single-family homeowners, and it also prioritized local concerns over regional concerns in a way that would severely limit where development could happen in the city (Morrow 2).

Drawing from research highlighting the advantages of incumbency on elections and firms in competitive markets, Einstein identifies similar advantages, such as racial background or homeownership status, that are bestowed upon some members of a community and that give them relative power to exclude prospective residents and ensure their advantages are maintained (Einstein et al., 21). Supported by the power of delay embedded in governmental functions, neighborhood incumbents have tools with which to maintain the status quo (Einstein et al., 28).

By analyzing datasets of housing regulations across cities and towns in Massachusetts and the share of multi-family building permits issued in each jurisdiction between 2000 and 2015, Einstein shows that almost all types of local regulations, and especially those regulating multi-family housing, have a negative effect on the number of multi-family building permits issued in a jurisdiction. Further compounding barriers to developing multi-family housing in the Massachusetts cities and towns Einstein, et al, studied are public meetings associated with regulations, which often take the form of requests for exemption from regulations (Einstein et al., 82). These meetings add to the time it takes to obtain approval for projects and give members of the public opportunities to express a diverse set of concerns, as well as support, or more likely oppose, development proposals (Einstein et al., 94).

By merging the names and addresses of those who speak during public meetings with the Massachusetts voter database and a property database, Einstein, et al, shed light on the demographics of the neighborhood defenders who attend public meetings. They find the group of individuals who speak at these meetings are more likely to own homes as compared to those who do not comment, and the chances of those living outside a given neighborhood speaking up at public meetings are low (Einstein et al., 101-102). Commenters are also more likely to be older, White, identify as men, and live close to the proposed development as compared with those not participating in meetings. The concentrated costs and diffuse benefits of housing developments

¹⁶ Einstein, Katherine Levine, et al. *Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America's Housing Crisis*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

¹⁷ Morrow, Greg. *The Homeowner Revolution: Democracy, Land Use and the Los Angeles Slow-Growth Movement, 1965--1992*. University of California, Los Angeles, 2013. *mit.primo.exlibrisgroup.com*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1466613838?pq-origsite=primo>.

motivate groups of people who consider themselves affected by a development to participate in public meetings and oppose new housing (Einstein et al., 110). In Venice Beach, those committed to opposing large, new developments under an urban renewal program and endorsing a code enforcement program to improve existing homes were largely white property owners long dissatisfied with Venice's reputation as a run-down "slum by the sea." Meade Eldred is a property owner who served on the Venice Urban Renewal Advisory Committee that rejected urban renewal in the late 1950s as well as chairman of the Venice Planning Committee which oversaw Venice's code enforcement program.¹⁸ As Venice property values increase in the early 1960s, Eldred asserted a "better class of people" have looked at Venice apartments since property values and rents have increased, noting that "If you want good, clean people as renters in Venice, you must give them good, clean apartments and houses to rent."¹⁹ In Eldred's comments to the newspaper, he reveals the way in which he views the upgrades in Venice as an investment in a "better class of people."

Einstein and her co-authors take their analysis even further to outline the avenues neighborhood defenders may take to block new housing in their communities. Coding for a variety of concerns raised at public meetings, ranging from neighborhood character to septic and water infrastructure limitations, they identify a wide range of reasons neighborhood defenders offer in opposition to a housing development (Einstein et al., 134). They may refer to existing regulations, whether or not they are directly related to the project in question, and some have also referred to expertise in related fields such as architecture or engineering, using sophisticated language that studies have shown can intimidate those less familiar with these issues (Einstein et al., 121). Lawsuits questioning permits issued or whether environmental conditions have been considered as well as those appealing to state governments to reconsider decisions made by local governments are among the efforts that can either halt or prohibitively delay developments (Einstein et al., 123-129). Associations formed amongst homeowners can serve as platforms for garnering support for opposition petitions, political campaigns to elect city council candidates reflecting their views on developments, or serve as advisory bodies for housing and other issues (Einstein et al., 134). By the early 1960s, a constellation of associations had formed in Venice with at least 15 gathered under the Venice Planning Committee.²⁰ Organized around neighborhoods, initiatives such as canal improvement or beach beautification, and identity-based causes, these organizations would proliferate throughout the 1960s to include organizations focused on eliminating poverty and other social justice issues.

In *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*,²¹ Jessica Trounstine explores the relationship between segregation and local government to argue that patterns of segregation and exclusionary local politics are not just the result of individual decisions and preferences, but rather are institutionalized and exacerbated by local governments. Centering racism in local politics, decisions, and outcomes, Trounstine offers evidence that the protection of property values and public goods motivates not just property owners but land use policy more broadly, with the effect of generating inequality and polarization (Trounstine 3). Arguing that the institutionalization of prejudice in land use and public spending at the local level has made segregation more intractable, Trounstine frames segregation as a mechanism that protects property values and public goods, which can help explain class segregation (Trounstine 18). Considering that beliefs about what types of neighbors are considered acceptable are shaped by the distribution of

¹⁸ Gavotto, Richard. "Pilot Area Check Almost Complete." *Evening Vanguard*, 6 Aug. 1962. newspapers.com.

¹⁹ Gavotto, Richard. "Venice Planner Watches Property Values Rocket." *Evening Vanguard*, 28 Mar. 1962. newspapers.com.

²⁰ "Planning Committee, One Year into Progress." *Evening Vanguard*, 6 Aug. 1962. newspapers.com.

²¹ Trounstine, Jessica. *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*. University Press, 2018.

public goods decades earlier, Trounstein's theory can also explain ongoing segregation. Trounstein's analysis widens the lens of this project to include the interaction between individual prejudices and the government institutions that operationalize and perpetuate them.

To situate Venice Beach's turn toward slow-growth land use policy in a specific moment in the United States, I turn to Brian Goldstein's book *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle Over Harlem*, which uncovers the layers of social movements, stakeholders, and interactions between Harlem community groups and city officials in the 1960s and 1970s to better understand the shape of Harlem's built environment in later decades. Harlem and Venice Beach share a history of gentrification, and though the political dynamics underlying them are unique to each geography, their dynamics in the late 1960s also share a confluence of social justice issues and stakeholders with varied interests. In both Goldstein's account and the version of Venice Beach history I was able to find, a broader swath of voices than property owners expressed skepticism of new development as well as a desire for self-determination. In Harlem, these voices included residents organized to provide the housing that public agencies could and did not, organizations ready to operationalize programs under the Black Power movement, and church leaders who stepped in as developers, among others (Goldstein 8-9). In Venice, leaders of organizations providing services for low-income residents, members of the local chapter of the Peace and Freedom Party, and a patchwork of neighborhood and community associations demanded to see a plan to protect low-income housing. In both places, community planners eager to lend their expertise to local activists attempted to institutionalize community design centers aimed at bringing new participants into local decision-making processes while ensuring a role for experts and the support from federal funding sources (Goldstein 27). Whether intentional or not, the confluence and conflict among these stakeholders in two different community planning processes resulted in at least one similar outcome: geographies that were ultimately unaffordable for much of the communities' original populations.

In tracing the outcomes of Harlem's community planning efforts, Goldstein suggests that gentrification served as a "third way" between the inclusive ideals expressed and a public rejection of exclusionary processes that had wreaked havoc in Harlem through urban renewal projects. This would happen by way of a "gradual diversification of the neighborhood as Harlem-based organizations built new mixed-income housing, supermarkets, and shopping malls that often met long-standing resident needs as well as those of a growing middle-class population (Goldstein 11)." This approach would assemble the residents, funding, and political allies needed to operationalize these ideals through building instead of focusing on structural change.

In this project, I explore whether gentrification became an unintentional, or perhaps intentional, strategy for enacting the demands levied in Venice Beach during this same time period. As sentiments about growth, justice, neighborhood identity, and freedom surfaced, perhaps one way for them to coalesce was in a slow-growth approach to land use. Though it would limit supply, drive up home prices, and precipitate yet another cycle of gentrification, this approach would also ease the concerns about the ritzy, high-rise developments that many feared would accompany higher-density zoning and displace long-time, low-income residents. It would also align with the efforts of property owners invested in a spruced-up version of Venice, one that could turn the neighborhood's trajectory from one where large-scale urban renewal projects were contemplated to a community taking on its own "revitalization," or code enforcement process. Facilitated by a community planning process that satisfied seemingly no one and accelerated a hyper-local focus on land use across Los Angeles, the sum total of this discussion was little to no future housing or commercial development contemplated in the 1970 Venice Community Plan. This would reverberate through Venice's trajectory in subsequent decades, made manifest through rising property values and taxes, more acute displacement of the people who called Oakwood and other parts of Venice home, and ongoing debates about Venice's identity. Could it remain a bohemian gathering spot embracing free-

thinking? Or would it become an enclave for Hollywood media moguls and, later on, the tech workers that have become emblematic of Venice's most recent round of gentrification?

As Morrow shows in his dissertation, Venice Beach was among the first two of Los Angeles' community plan areas to undertake a community planning process in the late 1960s. But it was certainly not the only geography in the city to enact slow-growth land use policies coming out of it. Morrow describes Los Angeles' shift from a more top-down planning approach to community planning as a reaction to a boom in suburban-style housing after World War II, increasing diversity and population growth, and an environmentalist movement sparking concerns about unbridled growth. Arguing homeowners mobilized in communities across Los Angeles to push for a slow-growth agenda, Morrow underlines the role the community planning approach implemented under Calvin Hamilton, Los Angeles' Planning Director from 1964 to 1986, played in enacting these sentiments in land-use policy: "In short, the homeowner revolution arose as a reaction to the rapid pace of change in post-war Los Angeles (and its discontents), but was enabled by a planning process that elevated homeowners' hyper-local concerns above all others (549)."

In a 1995 interview nearly a decade after he finished his 20-year tenure as Los Angeles' planning chief, Hamilton remembered the city's efforts to infuse its process to update its General Plan with the goals and long-range objectives of its citizens and rooting all technical and community plans in those goals. He estimated thousands of residents participated in the goal-setting stage of the process in 60 locations across the city. The priorities that surfaced in those conversations – among them the protection of homeowners, maintaining a variety of housing, preserving the beauty of the mountains, and a lack of transportation – gave birth to the "centers" concept core to the updated General Plan, involving multiple centers with more dense housing and commercial activity in locations throughout the city with public transit connecting them. According to Hamilton, these goals then informed how land use policies and other social and economic measures could be applied in specific parts of the city: "These thirty-five community planning areas had been so helpful because they all involved many citizens in each of the communities, because I felt that was essential (Hamilton 122)."

III. Methodology

I began this archival research process as a research assistant for Professor Devin Bunten in an effort to better understand the voices of the Venice Beach community in the years preceding one of the neighborhood's many cycles of gentrification in the 1980s. I did not have formal training in archival research, and started this project by searching for newspaper articles in the *Evening Vanguard*, a daily newspaper covering Venice Beach, and the *Los Angeles Times* related to planning efforts or major changes in Venice Beach that may have shaped the built environment and the planning conversations that followed. Some of these events included a building inspection program in the 1960s, a community planning effort in mid-1960s, and the banning of oil drilling during the same time period. Drawing from previous coursework in library sciences, I identified the names of notable actors as well as programs and projects named in newspaper articles and used them as search terms to see if I could find primary source documents in the Los Angeles City Archives or other archives held by universities and research institutions in California. The Online Archive of California is a research portal offering a directory of historical material collected at libraries, research institutions, and museums across California. Though it proved a very helpful resource for alerting me to existence and location of records, the librarians at several of these institutions offered much greater depth of detail as to the types of records they held and how to view them.

In August of 2021, I took a trip to Los Angeles through my research assistantship with Professor Bunten to view records at the Los Angeles City Archives, the University of Southern California's Special Collections, and the Huntington Library's Southern California Regional Planning Collection. During these visits, I largely found records pertaining to proposed and official planning documents originating from the city planning and related departments, as well as commentary from residents directed to city officials about those plans. In March of 2022, thanks to the William Emerson Travel Grant offered through the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning, I was able to travel to Los Angeles again to specifically view records for my thesis project at the California State University Long Beach, California State University Northridge, Center for the Study of Political Graphics, the Los Angeles City Archive, and the University of Southern California. During this trip, I was able to view records created by grassroots organizations advocating for self-determination in Venice Beach, an environmental activist, community groups organizing for revisions of the 1970 Venice Community Plan, as well as the correspondence of city and congressional officials whose districts included Venice Beach, among others.

In between these two trips, and in the aftermath of both of them, I attempted to make meaning of what I found and account for gaps in each of the processes. Part of this process involved reflecting on the three years I spent as a local newspaper reporter and my growing awareness of the biases journalistic publications hold. Operating under various definitions of objectivity, many journalists and editors either intentionally or unintentionally focus attention on the narratives of elected officials and others whose influence is recognized by government institutions. I realized by starting with newspaper accounts of current events in Venice Beach, I was already operating on a limited set of perspectives as guides to the neighborhood's history. I also recognized the voices reflected in the pages of the daily newspaper or in Los Angeles' archives were reflective of those empowered to hold positions of power, namely elected or appointed officials, or those connected to people in positions of power. Beyond the newspaper accounts I used as entry points into Venice Beach's history, many of the planning documents I was able to review in my first trip to Los Angeles originated with city officials or departments. Based on the typed letters that formed the correspondence between citizens and city officials on these proposed plans and programs, I inferred that many of those raising concerns about or voicing support for these programs were people who felt a certain level of agency to make their opinions known to city government. They were not as

likely have had little to no trust in the government if they were taking the time to collect their thoughts, type them out, and send them to a city official expecting a response.

During my second trip to the archives, I was able to review sets of records that originated outside of government, largely from citizen activists driven by an array of interests. At the California State University Long Beach's Special Collections, I was able to view documents coordinating the activities of coalitions of service providers and organizations formed in response to Los Angeles' community planning effort, which many viewed as a top-down process exclusive of many of the low-income residents of Venice Beach. Letters between member organizations and individuals of the nascent Venice Community Design Center demonstrate the efforts of professional planners and architects interested in infusing the community planning process with robust input from low-income and minority residents and workers in Venice. The notes and letters written by Susan B. Nelson, a well-known environmental and open space advocate in Los Angeles, provide a window into the frustrations some had with the attitudes of city officials as well as the campaign to do community plans for each of the city's 35 "community areas." Correspondence from the Venice Civic Improvement Union (VCIU) and commentary on the grassroots organization's leadership and funding status reveal the fractious nature of working across identity-based organizations fighting for many of the same causes, namely housing for low-income residents, parks for neighborhoods within Venice that had been previously disinvested in, and much-needed services for Venice's poorest residents.

While the records I viewed on my second trip to Los Angeles did not bring me close to a comprehensive understanding of the many expectations placed on the 1970 community planning process, they did provide new dimensions to my understanding of what drove certain demands and how grassroots organizations conceived of their agency in the community planning process. But even these collections couldn't begin to contain the voices of those who didn't engage in Venice Beach's community planning process at all, or whose perspectives were not deemed worthy of saving in archives by city government and grassroots organizations alike. This led me to wonder how groups that were marginalized by government-driven processes or active community organizations may have conceived of their agency to envision and enact a future for themselves. From my experience searching for and looking through the archives I was able to access, I could understand how the breadth and depth of these collections were subject to the judgment of the individuals and organizations involved with preserving them and making them available to the public. Whether someone thought to keep a flyer or letter depended on whether they believed in a future use of the document, implicating biases on the importance of record-keeping in general and the value of specific records and record authors. My positionality as a mixed-race, cis-gender woman who presents as White also shaped the way I have come to understand what records are and their importance, so I felt it was important to interrogate how my own biases and perspectives shaped my assumptions and approach to this research project.

To situate the records I was able to view in the broader pool of evidence of community planning, I turned to Professor Delia Wendel, who recommended several works by archival scholars and activists as well as urban historians examining memory injustice and liberatory frameworks for archival processes. In her book *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work*,²² Professor Michelle Caswell seeks to "situate[e] the current state of archival discourses and practices in the oppressive structures from which they emerge, imagining new ways of thinking about and doing archives that emancipate rather than oppress, and most importantly, describing projects that begin to enact such visions of liberatory memory work (Caswell 13)." Director of UCLA's Community Archives Lab, Caswell both challenges beneficiaries of oppressions like white supremacy and hetero-patriarchy to

²² Caswell, Michelle. *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work*. Routledge, 2021.

dismantle the notion of hierarchy while simultaneously uplifting the ways in which community archives held by minoritized groups foster representational belonging and catalyze activism.

To expose the oppressive effect of dominant Western archival theory on communities marginalized from it, Caswell explores differences in concepts of time among dominant and minoritized groups. She locates dominant Western archival thinking in the Christian tradition of asserting the march of history toward human progress (Caswell 26), and, in doing so, shows how these assumptions can lead to an understanding of oppressions as a thing of the past. Caswell terms the narratives coming out of this tradition as “linear progress narratives” that position archival work as an avenue for understanding and improving upon the past. This linear understanding of time cannot easily be reconciled with non-dominant concepts of time as cyclical, which have been fostered by Hindu, Indigenous North American, Black, and queer cultures, among others. These traditions embrace different concepts of non-linear time based on unique understandings of time, everything from an overlapping sense of the past, present, and future as in some Indigenous communities to acknowledgment of ways in which past trauma re-occurs in the present as has been understood by some Afro-futurists (Caswell 28). As part of the Christian tradition and promulgated through colonialism, linear progress narratives have become the dominant Western temporality, enacted through calendars and based in part on beliefs in the improvement of the human condition, that things get better, oppression wanes, and rights are recognized and honored over time (Caswell 30). Because of inequities in power between groups, differences in time concepts can impact lived experiences, “as oppressed communities are forced to restructure their actions to adhere to the demands of dominant linear notions of time (Caswell 31).”

The harm inflicted upon communities who must conform to linear progress narratives is a form of what Caswell calls “chronoviolence,” which she also argues can be racialized to implicate white supremacy. In thinking about how linear progress narratives surfaced in the archives I consulted, I can see how the process of preserving records with the Los Angeles city government and university libraries upholds the records’ existence in the past, a design by which future reference of those records can illustrate a progress narrative. By undertaking a process to plan for a couple decades in the future, city planning officials are demonstrating their belief in a future that is better predicted than the present or past had been, essentially a future to be an improvement over what has taken place. In the case of the city archives, the records of elected and appointed officials have been kept to preserve a log of city history that can be consulted to determine future decisions. By fixing these records in the past and storing them in vaults only accessible by a detailed request process of which a select group of researchers are seemingly aware, these archives uphold processes separating these records from their future use. This belies a foundational belief that their future use may “demonstrate milestones toward racial progress in a linear narrative” (35), as Caswell articulates. For anyone not familiar with the timing and regularity of city processes and meetings or whose temporality does not conform with linear progress narratives, inclusion in both city and university archives is not likely. Many of those serving in city government at the time were white men, so these records preserve their perspectives on what programs and policies should be pursued, who they consulted and listened to, and their priorities. Much less frequently seen in these archives are the voices of leaders of minoritized groups; even as calls for more low-income housing were sounded in these years, many of the professional planners and activists leading them were white men and women, though I found records showing the efforts of Black and Mexican American leaders active in community planning discourse.

Caswell looks to community archives, or archives in which the history held in common coalesces around a shared history of oppression, to intervene on repetitions of oppression like racism and state violence. Community archives construct records minoritized groups can refer to in the present moment. Largely held by those whose histories have been ignored, misrepresented or

underrepresented, community archives have the potential to activate activist strategies and inspirations from the past and create a bridge to the present, instead of articulating a history of unfolding progress (Caswell 63). Before my second trip to Los Angeles, I attempted to find community archives such as the examples Caswell described in *Urgent Archives* that might contain records pertaining to Venice Beach in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. There are many thriving community archives in Southern California, among them two Caswell describes in *Urgent Archives* – the Lambda Archives of San Diego, which collect, preserve, and share LGBTQ+ history, and the La Historia Society in El Monte just east of Los Angeles. However, I could not during this project find records that directly pertained to this period of Venice Beach’s history. This is not to suggest relevant records do not exist in community archives, and I would identify this as an area worthy of more time and attention in a future iteration of this research project. I believe making connections with staff managing these collections would be critical to identifying specific records. However, the reality is that many of these collectives are understaffed and working under limited resources, which can make connecting meaningfully with staff a slower process than this thesis timeline might allow.

To explore the potential of community archives as it relates to this project, I will analyze the methods used by a group of writers and editors who came together to create the Community Data Sheet, which was a publication dedicated to bridging racial and class divides in Venice Beach discourse and representing the voice of the Black community in Oakwood. Though I located this record in the Los Angeles City Archives in one of Councilman Marvin Braude’s files (which is not part of a community archive) I believe the Community Data Sheet illustrates the oppressions of minoritized groups in Venice on their own terms as opposed to through the lens of a white newspaper reporter or city official preparing a report. In developing an understanding of how this publication fosters representational belonging and opportunities for dialogue and activism of minoritized residents in the present, I think we can come closer to understanding the way in which records originating from minoritized groups or those who do not hold power in traditional government structures can fill meaningful gaps of knowledge about a community and its desires for the future.

In an essay titled “History, Myth, and Counter-Memory: Narrative and Desire in Popular Novels” in *Time Passages*,²³ Professor George Lipsitz outlines debates about the role that history and myth can play in reframing and refocusing dominant narratives. Pitting the individual and generalizable experiences against each other and describing camps of thought based on the way in which each either embraces or rejects subjectivity and objectivity, Lipsitz demonstrates for the reader a path toward viewing them as a dichotomy, or diametrically opposed. But he himself seems to embrace the tension between the two and the need for both to illuminate localized experiences of oppression by way of myths, as well as a collective accounting of generalizable experiences that occurs in the writing of history. Asserting novels are one medium for exploring both, via personal experiences and social realities, Lipsitz offers a path toward uncovering a greater number of truths than if one were to rely on either myths or history. Reading the Community Data Sheet through Caswell and Lipsitz’s lenses, I hope to demonstrate how the publication’s authors sought to reject objectivity in an effort to more clearly understand the intentions of different actors during Venice’s community planning efforts, establish representational belonging for minoritized groups in a print record that could be referenced during cycles of oppression, and activate participation through invitations to contribute writing and ideas. For the archival records I reference in this project, I will provide reference to the positionality of each speaker, who is documenting the document at hand, and potential gaps in this archival process related to the speaker’s positionality and archival

²³ Lipsitz, George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

documentation process. In doing this, my hope is to situate the record in many forms of oppression embodied by the institutions that hold them and the historical context from which they originated.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that racial slurs and other terms and phrases that are inappropriate in today's context and were never just to use appear in the archival records I reviewed. The painful histories of these words and the trauma of repeating them motivated me to avoid quoting these terms or referencing them where possible so as to not recreate these harms. There is one instance in which an inappropriate term is used in the title of a news article that may not be identifiable in a database unless the term is included. I chose to include the article as a reference because it was a rare instance of one of the more traditional newspapers attempting to provide the perspective of the Black community in Oakwood on urban renewal in the 1960s.

IV. Archival Analysis

To contextualize some of the demands being made in the late 1960s during the Venice Community Plan discussions, it is helpful to understand the conversations preceding them. I specifically focus on debates about Los Angeles' proposal to site urban renewal projects in Venice Beach in the late 1950s, as well as commentary about the code enforcement program that was implemented there in the 1960s as a response to Venice's rejection of urban renewal. Both of these programs sparked vigorous debate reflected in newspaper articles and correspondence to City Councilman Marvin Braude. I also examine the frustrations about the 1970 Community Plan as expressed to Braude and other city officials, as well as efforts to rollback density in specific parts of Venice after the passage of the 1970 plan. Appendix A holds photos of the each of the records referenced in this section.

Urban Renewal Debates

Record 1: *Evening Vanguard* Manager Weighs In

- Title: "The Venice Story"²⁴
- Date: Feb. 14, 1958
- Record Type: Opinion column in daily newspaper
- Author: Les Robinson, manager of the *Evening Vanguard*

Who is speaking: Les Robinson, manager of the *Evening Vanguard* newspaper who writes a weekly column about local issues. From review of several of these columns, Robinson tends to favor the interests of property owners and the increase of property values in Venice, is staunchly against urban renewal, and is a vocal advocate for the development of the Marina del Rey harbor.

Who is documenting and for what purpose: Robinson's columns are memorialized in the *Evening Vanguard's* archives, which are stored on newspapers.com. Many communities are biased toward preserving newspapers as they are believed by some to be a "daily record" of a community's history. Newspaper publications, especially those with large circulations and targeting the general public, are implicated in and promote the narratives of elected officials, property owners, and those who are well-connected with newspaper editors and reporters at the time. Within the Venice Beach context, this means that the views and initiatives of white men and women were more widely represented in newspapers like the *Evening Vanguard*, a daily newspaper operating from 1907 until the late 1980s, and the views and initiatives of people of color were more rarely documented there.

Gaps in this process through the speaker's positionality: In his columns in the *Evening Vanguard*, Robinson expresses his opinions about whether new developments in Venice are promising or a harbinger of Venice's decline. He sometimes speaks with the leaders of civic groups to offer specific views on a given issue, and advocates for strategies to increase property values in the neighborhood. By giving space in the newspaper he manages to the views of wealthier property and business owners and advocating for specific city programs, Robinson belies the issues with which he is most concerned. We

²⁴ Robinson, Les. "The Venice Story." *Evening Vanguard*, 14 Feb. 1958. newspapers.com.

cannot know what Robinson thinks of all the groups operating in Venice, such as renters and people of color, but we have a glimpse of what he prioritized in the content of his columns.

From research of the *Evening Vanguard* newspaper's archives, it seems that the possibility of siting urban renewal projects in Venice surfaced in the mid- to late 1950s. In a Feb. 14, 1958, column by Les Robinson, the newspaper's editor, one perspective against the possibility of urban renewal is clear: "The bulldozer approach is what we must watch, the thing we must guard against, whether Urban Renewal or simple conservation by enforcing present building and safety codes are eventually approved for Venice."

Robinson asserted that an issue of *Realtor's Headlines*, a news publication of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, characterized how "many Venetians" feel about the toll urban renewal has taken on American cities. Looking closely at urban renewal's "bulldozer effect," the publication lamented the wasteful nature of the demolition undertaken under urban renewal, especially as compared with the beauty that could be preserved from a carefully planned rehabilitation of a place. Robinson was wary that the city's reasoning behind siting urban renewal projects in Venice was out of a concern for the small-sized lots on Venice's beachfront, which he felt preserved a continuous waterfront that would be lost with redevelopment: "Best of all, and safest, it seems from here, is to let property values and a local-sponsored cleanup and upgrading program be used. Otherwise a lot of people will be in for a first class pushing around."

In this column, Robinson uses his platform to advocate for land use policy that centers the protection of property values, which he points to as a goal of rejecting urban renewal in Venice and opting instead for a "clean-up" effort. In this way, his motivations are not unlike those of the neighborhood defenders as defined by Einstein. Ready to oppose developments near their properties, neighborhood defenders engage deeply with local planning processes to advocate for specific housing policies, sometimes organizing campaigns with like-minded neighbors. Here, Robinson attempts to build campaigns against urban renewal and for a code enforcement program among his readers. By advocating for code enforcement as an alternative that would be less disruptive to Venice residents while also turning "blighted" areas into more valuable property, Robinson is prioritizing current residents who can afford to weather the havoc code enforcement would eventually wreak on lower-income residents.

This limited view into the future, one which seemingly only includes wealthier neighborhood incumbents, contributed to the housing shortage Morrow describes as resulting from hyper-local planning processes privileging the voices of those who own property. The cumulative effect of communities like Venice focusing solely on improving the current housing stock was a local, regional, and statewide shortage of homes, which Dougherty described in *Golden Gates* through the stories of a teen burdened with the combined stress of being displaced from her home and advocating for the preservation of low-income housing in her neighborhood. Employing a limited imagination of what the community's future will look like – some version of the same with no consideration of a growing population – Robinson's perspective is emblematic of the voices that are heard most loudly in community planning meetings across the United States today.

Code Enforcement Commentary

For the early 1960s, code enforcement served as a galvanizing planning strategy for city officials and some residents of Venice Beach, much as it would draw the financial pain and

displacement of many others. To implement this scheme, staff from the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety divided Venice up into five zones demarcating the geographies and order by which building inspections would take place.²⁵ By the end of the first two phases, \$2 million in city permits for building and repair had been issued and buildings on 223 of the 604 lots had been either repaired or demolished. By the end of the first three phases of code enforcement, 488 structures had been demolished.²⁶ A survey of correspondence between residents, Braude, and other city officials involved with carrying out code enforcement in 1965 and 1966, some three years after code enforcement began in earnest in Venice,²⁷ includes tempered enthusiasm, disgust, and mixed feelings about the program that would raze some of Venice’s oldest buildings. In this section, I will analyze correspondence from two individuals: Max Polsky and Mrs. V.M. Hall. Because these records originated in the same place, I will contextualize the records as a group.



Image 1 - Map of Venice Beach code enforcement phases according to press coverage in the *Evening Vanguard*

Who is speaking: One thing this group has in common is the wherewithal to write a letter to their City Council representative to express concerns about their situations. Max Polsky identifies himself as a Venice property owner, and V.M. Hall indicates an address at the end of her letter but not whether she is a property owner. Polsky’s status as a property owner lends itself to a claim of ownership over the future of Venice. Both speakers felt empowered to communicate an issue to a city councilmember with the expectation of a response. This is an indication of some level of trust in local government and belief in the benefits of participating in government processes.

Who is documenting and for what purpose: These letters were found in Councilman Braude’s files, which are stored in the Los Angeles City Archives. In keeping these records, Braude and his staff may have been trying to show legitimacy for his decisions by showing the pressures he was under to make decisions, his polite style of

²⁵ “Venice Uplift Plan Pushed: City Building Inspection Will Start in New Area.” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995), 2 Feb. 1964, p. V1.

²⁶ Haydon, Brownlee. *The Venice Area Needs Your Help*. Venice Area Vocational Training Corporation. USC Libraries Special Collections, Box 332, Folder 40. Accessed 30 Mar. 2022.

²⁷ “VPC Hears Report on Buildings.” *Evening Vanguard*, 20 June 1962. newspapers.com.

communication with constituents (replying with gratitude for their input), and his rationale for making decisions. This may mean that records that don't put him in a positive light may not be included. These records were also subject to the archival standards of the Los Angeles city government over the course of more than five decades, and therefore some records may have been saved or discarded depending on an individual's definition of a record or the way in which they valued different stakeholders included in the files. As Michelle Caswell writes in *Urgent Archives*, dominant Western archival theory relies on linear notions of time that place archival use in a more just future-to-come, which can impose a white temporal understanding of events on oppressed people who have not experienced them in this way. Academic and government institutions have relied on these concepts of time and a certain "inevitability of justice" that can silence those who have experienced racial or gender-based inequities, among other injustices, as well as hinder their ability to maintain their own histories for activation and activism in the present moment.

Gaps in this process through the speaker's positionality: Because Polsky references property ownership and both Polsky and Hall wrote letters to Braude or city officials, they exhibit a sense of empowerment to call on city officials to address their problems. There are many others who would not feel empowered to implore city officials to look at their problems due to a variety of reasons, from racial injustice to a general lack of trust or knowledge or government. This archival analysis does not include the perspectives of these individuals, nor those whose correspondence with Braude may have been discarded.

Record 2: Letter from Max Polsky to Councilman Braude regarding code enforcement²⁸

- Date: Aug. 15, 1965
- Record Type: Letter from Venice Beach resident to Councilman Marvin Braude
- Author: Max Polsky, retired resident of Venice Beach, owner of two homes, claims dependency on Social Security checks

In a letter dated Aug. 15, 1965, Max Polsky describes the financial burden of upgrading two of his properties during the code enforcement program, but ultimately endorses the program and advocates for officials to expand its reach so all of Venice is improved: "I have brought my two houses up to code according to the letter sent to me by the city. It cost me six thousand dollars. I hope you realize this is a great sum of money to me since I have to live on my social security check. Now I am not complaining nor did I complain when it came to bringing my houses up to code. But I find it rather ridiculous to rehabilitate a small section of Venice and leave the rest a horrible slum ... I spent six thousand dollars to fix my houses and two blocks away there are such poor rundown dwellings that it doesn't matter what I do to my houses, the neighborhood is still very bad."

Polsky's appeal to Braude to continue the code enforcement program is an example of how a hyper-local focus on the future of Venice can limit its potential to accommodate people of all income levels and means there. Polsky is aware of the financial burden the program places on individual property owners, yet seems to expect other property owners to similarly weather these costs. This is presumably so those who can afford to make the required improvements can benefit from the elevated property values many associated with the "upgrade" program. Polsky doesn't

²⁸ Polsky, Max. 15 Aug. 1965. Los Angeles City Archive, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center, Box D439, Venice Canals.

consider what might happen to property owners who, unlike him, are not able to afford the required improvements to their homes, which is likely indicative of a myopic focus on upgrading the neighborhood at all costs. This attitude is commensurate with the attitudes property owners display in Einstein's *Neighborhood Defenders*, where development projects large and small are rejected by neighboring property owners because they are seen as a threat to their property values and the value they attach to their homes at the time they purchased them. It's not clear from this letter whether Polsky attended public meetings to oppose new developments in his neighborhood, but he is channeling his concern about what he terms a slum-like condition of Venice into supporting planning tool available to him now – a code enforcement program he himself struggled with. He references his ability to pay for the \$6,000 in required improvements to his two properties as credibility for making this request of Braude, which appeals to the influence current residents have over city planning processes relative to those who don't own property or outsiders to the community who wish to live there.

Polsky's letter reveals the way in which land use policy can be leveraged to protect property values and public goods across racial and class lines as Trounstine describes in *Segregation By Design*. Whatever racial or economic segregation existed in Venice before the code enforcement was applied could have only been exacerbated by the program given the financial pressures it would have placed on anyone below Polsky's means. The program not only served as a vehicle to improve property values for wealthier property owners able to sustain the unexpected cost of upgrading their homes, but it also displaced lower-income residents to other neighborhoods or outside Venice altogether. This resorting of groups along racialized terms and across economic means would distanced members of different socioeconomic groups even further, creating more homogenous living patterns in Venice.

By both rejecting the larger-scale development schemes under urban renewal and opting for a regressive code enforcement program in its stead, those most influential in local Venice planning decisions put the neighborhood on a path many cities across California were taking toward more restrictive housing policy and development regulations. As Dougherty describes in *Golden Gates*, property values came to constitute a larger share of household wealth at the same time as concerns about population growth and environmental causes dominated the political consciousness of the state, spurring municipalities across the state to adopt growth moratoria and favor low-density zoning. As more and more cities adopted these types of policies, the state's housing shortage grew to the point where it touches nearly every region in the state.

Record 3: Letter from Mrs. V.M. Hall to Councilman Braude asking to end code enforcement

- Date: March 31, 1966
- Record Type: Letter from Venice Beach resident to Councilman Marvin Braude
- Author: V.M. Hall, a Venice Beach resident

In contrast to Polsky's letter, a March 31, 1966, letter²⁹ from Mrs. V.M. Hall to Braude decries the code enforcement program for the burden it has placed on Venice's older population. She calls on Braude to discontinue the program, which she describes as forcing seniors on fixed incomes into choosing among a poor, limited set of options, such as abandoning or selling their homes for low prices or working with contractors who promised to make costly improvements and

²⁹ Hall, V. M. 31 Mar. 1966. Los Angeles City Archive, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center, Box D439, Venice rehabilitation (65-66).

ran off with the money: “In relation to the rehabilitation as it was practised [sic] and would be again, the net effect of it was that it took the homes away from people who had bought and paid for them legitimately ... The land was taken from them and made available at the lowest possible price to land buyers. The mechanism was this. The inspectors came around and the old person was in due course presented with a letter which said he must spend thousands of dollars – say \$7,000 – by a certain date or get out. Many of the old people concerned have no \$7,000 to spend. They were living on the proceeds of savings, which due to inflation (again no fault of theirs) was little enough, or they were living on social security. In many cases the only thing that was actually owned was their home ... Rehabilitation as it was practised [sic] in Venice is in the interests of the land speculator only. It is like laying out the animal carcass for the vultures, and that carcass is made up of the lives and hopes of people of the area being ‘rehabilitated.’”

Charging the rehabilitation program with being a land grab in the interests of land speculators, Hall’s letter highlights the plight of people who are unable to afford the costs of preserving the character of Venice Beach and therefore cannot reap the rewards of its rising property values after code enforcement. Her testimony on behalf of those residents shows the code enforcement program could be characterized as an effort to benefit Venice’s middle class or potential new middle class residents rather than the Venice population as a whole, since those unable to keep up with the cost of the required improvements have few choices but to leave and find a home somewhere else. Described as such, the code enforcement program is another example of a land use policy leveraged to protect property values and likely increase racial and class segregation in Venice, as Trounstein points out is often the case. Characterizing the hopes of the older people displaced by the code enforcement program as a carcass for speculating vultures, Hall describes the lived experience of oppression under this program, an effort that might be lauded by Caswell for inserting this often-ignored perspective into the public consciousness. Even within an archive that is maintained by a government institution, the people least valued in the decision to enact a code enforcement program in Venice are represented, and their struggle is a reference point for any others who find themselves in a similar position.

Though it is not clear whether Hall identifies as one of the older people struggling with the code enforcement program, her care for these people and anger about the program’s effects are the kind of community response that should not be left behind in a more regional approach to planning. Its fidelity to the emotional response to code enforcement’s harmful effects can draw planners into the experience much more fully than an abstract request to end the program can. As planners think more broadly about what measures are needed to accommodate future populations, they cannot ignore the experience of those who have always felt the greatest impact of planning decisions.

1970 Venice Community Plan Commentary

Record 4: Community Data Sheet, publication that seeks to represent all voices in Venice and takes a critical stance toward the Venice Community Plan process³⁰

- Title: The Community Data Sheet, with a “Sounds of Venice” section
- Date: Aug. 15, 1969
- Record Type: Newspaper publication with news articles and opinion pieces
- Authors: Various, bylines include Curtis Rossiter (editor?), Mary Ellen Garrity, Dorothy Fleming, Henry Hansman, Margie Legans, Beverly Lewis, D. F. Wright, Bob Yaller

³⁰ Rossiter, Curtis. “Community Data Sheet.” *Community Data Sheet*, 15 Aug. 1969. Los Angeles City Archive, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center, Box D-0416, Venice Master Plan (69-70).

Who is speaking: Under the banner of the *Community Data Sheet*, several writers come together to share updates about the Venice community in the publication's inaugural issue. One section of the *Community Data Sheet*, the Sounds of Venice, describes the failure of most newspapers to "give an accurate view of what is happening in the Black community," and expresses a need for the Black community of Oakwood to have a voice that speaks to their needs and concerns. Also described as a newspaper attempting to give the minority community a voice and a tool for organizing, the anonymous writer of the Sounds of Venice's opening article "Why Black Community Needs Newspaper" declares the newspaper "open to full participation by the people in the community."

Who is documenting and for what purpose: This letter was found in Councilman Braude's files, which are stored in the Los Angeles City Archives. Written by hand on the newspapers' first page is the text: "Curtis Rossiter & Co. / File Venice Master Plan." In keeping these records, Braude and his staff may have been trying to show legitimacy for his decisions by showing the pressures he was under to make decisions, his polite style of communication with constituents (replying with gratitude for their input), and his rationale for making decisions. This may mean that records that don't put him in a positive light may not be included. These records were also subject to the archival standards of the Los Angeles city government over the course of more than five decades, and therefore some records may have been saved or discarded depending on an individual's definition of a record or the way in which they valued different stakeholders included in the files. Though I would have liked to see subsequent issues of this publication, I was not able to find any more in Braude's files.

Gaps in this process through the speaker's positionality: This publication seems to prioritize the voices of the Black community in Oakwood, while also aiming to represent all voices in Venice that haven't been represented by the traditional newspapers of the time. The expressed need for a newspaper that accurately represents the experience of Black people is clearly communicated in the newspaper's opening articles. Though a few letters in the Los Angeles city archives advocate for low- and moderate-income communities and minoritized groups, I did not come across any that were explicit in their desire to represent specific perspectives, and also could not be certain as to who was representing certain organizations in their correspondence with city officials. This document filled a gap I had in understanding how minoritized communities viewed the proposed Venice Community Plan in their own words. However, this publication represented a handful of perspectives from authors who may or may not have identified with the Black community, and I was not able to find many more documents representing individuals identifying with other racial groups in Venice.

This publication contains two critiques of the Venice Community Plan process: it questions who the plan is for and whether the city is capable of consulting a wider swath of the Venice community besides a small group of property owners. Containing updates on the city-run community planning process, an article about police brutality in Venice, and poetry, the inaugural Community Data Sheet explains why the Black community of Oakwood needs a newspaper that can tell them the truth about city-backed processes. An article titled "Citizens Fight Against Master Plan" updates readers on recent public hearings related to the plan, which described recently-approved changes to the proposed plan such as the retention

of multi-family housing in Oakwood and statements acknowledging the need for low-income housing and banning construction on the beach: “The question remains, does the Master plan, with these changes incorporated, serve the needs of residents presently living in Venice, or is it really designed towards residents the City of L.A. would like to see living there in 20 years. We don’t really know.” The author wonders if it would be too much to ask the City Council to include a paragraph stating Oakwood and much of the Venice beachfront would be laid out for low-cost housing and the beach area will designated as a low- to middle-income artistic community: “All we want the community to say is simply, ‘We’re not going to have to go back to another stinking rotten ghetto just because some men with a lot of money see a chance to make a little more.’” The article concludes by stating the Los Angeles Planning Commission approved the plan despite opposition from nearly 150 Venice residents, and described efforts to delay further action on the plan.

The second article in the *Community Data Sheet* concerning the community plan is written by Henry Hansman describes a coalition of community groups banding together to oppose the proposed community plan out of concern that it “spells the beginning of the end for the low-income community in Venice.” Describing the plan as calling for Venice to be developed into a “fashionable residential and beach resort community,” Hansman notes that luxury resort communities have been cropping up to the north and south of Venice, and the approval of the proposed plan would accelerate similar development in Venice. Charging the plan with no provisions for the 15,000 low-income Venice residents threatened by this type of development, several community organizations have objected to the plan, asserting that the needs and desires of current Venice residents should be prioritized. If the groups are successful in delaying the plan’s adoption, Hansman said they plan to create a planning process privately funded by a foundation that would be rooted in a “broad-based citizens’ committee” with technical assistance from consultants.

In the advocacy, care, and emotional expression of the Community Data Sheet, it’s possible to see how minoritized communities maintained their own histories, organized, and advocated for themselves in the face of a planning process they didn’t feel accounted for their needs. The publication’s authors may have embodied different sets of politics, but their goal in creating the Community Data Sheet was focused on representing perspectives that have not been heard by other newspapers or government institutions. The grassroots energy around providing for the Black community in Oakwood is not unlike the commitment to self-determination imbued by community organizations in Harlem during the same time period, as described by Brian Goldstein in *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem*. Galvanized by the civil rights and Black Power movements, among others, leaders in the community took unprecedented steps to not only resist additional urban renewal projects in their neighborhood but to draft alternate plans as counter-measures, some of which garnered the government funding that would make them a reality. Goldstein’s argument extends to say a shifting set of goals based on idealistic hopes, practical strategies, and funding sources informed the gradual diversification of the neighborhood with mixed-income housing, supermarkets, and shopping malls to meet both the needs of the current and a growing middle-class population. In other words, gentrification became a middle ground between inclusive and exclusionary ideals. Though Venice would meet a similar fate in gentrification, it is unclear whether gentrification was the strategy that advocates like the authors of the Community Data Sheet would have rallied around. It may have simply been the outcome of the limits on growth promoted by advocates of low-income housing and property owners alike, albeit for very different reasons.

The Community Data Sheet also enacts several of the characteristics of liberatory memory work as identified in Caswell's *Urgent Archives*. In doing so, it offers lessons to the planning practice about engaging with epistemologies that exist outside planning's typical realm of engagement. Encouraging active participation of its readers, activating its articles for mobilization in the present, and creating space for representational belonging are among the hallmarks of community archives as described by Caswell contained in the Community Data Sheet.

The article "Why Black Community Needs Newspaper" powerfully enacts several of these characteristics, asserting that: "The Black community of Oakwood needs a voice that speaks to their needs and concerns. The major newspapers fail to give an accurate view of what is happening in the Black community. They do not relate the struggle on the local level to the national and world struggle." In this statement, the anonymous author establishes for the Black community in Oakwood that their struggle is not localized, but rather part of a larger phenomenon involving other oppressors and minoritized communities. This simple idea broadens the lens through which to see these struggles, not as oppressions unique to this community but part of a larger system of oppression as well as counterparts in minoritized communities finding ways to resist. The author is explicit about the impact it is imagined the newspaper will have, specifically that it will provide Oakwood's poor with the truth about the community planning process, information that can empower them to advocate for themselves: "That the Venice Master Plan is designed to remove all poor people from Oakwood to another ghetto and this will bring in Whites from surrounding communities so that they may be right near the beach. These are the kind of things the poor people must know so that they can rise up and fight." This newspaper is imbued with a sense that its contents can be used as fodder for advocacy in the present moment, not a passive record preserved for a chance passerby in the archives to come across in a distant future moment that might never come. The newspaper is meant to be read today, for use in the present moment.

The article's author, who may be Curtis Rossiter, also invites active participation in compiling content, closing the article with this paragraph: "This newspaper is an attempt to give the minority community a voice and a tool for organizing. This newspaper is open to full participation by the people in the community." The author does not seem to subscribe to the veneer of objectivity from which many newspaper editors and reporters claim to operate. The open invitation to anyone to contribute demonstrates the paper's proximity to its readers rather than whatever distance may separate a newspaper staff's "objectivity" and the relative subjectivity of its readers. By dismissing distinctions between readers and writers, the ethos of the Community Data Sheet embodies some of the same characteristics as the community archives Caswell describes in her book. Dispelling with restrictive ideas about what constitutes a record, these community-driven organizations welcome archival contributions from their communities in a variety of formats and invited the creation of records during pivotal moments in their communities' histories. Caswell argues that representational belonging, the experience of seeing oneself and one's community as present in an archival space, is a grounding impact of community archives that counters underrepresentation or misrepresentation of minoritized communities in historic records. I believe it is possible to see the representational belonging established by the Community Data Sheet in action in an article titled "Why I Want to Be a Journalist" by Dorothy Fleming. Attributed to the "Sounds of Venice" Journalism Workshop, it may be inferred that Fleming is one of the teens participating in the workshop hosted by the newspaper. In Fleming's words: "I would like to be a journalist because I would like for once to see the

truth printed about Venice, and I feel that we the people of Venice, need a newspaper owned and published by us. I also think that if we set up our own newspaper we won't have to depend upon second-class news."

In plain terms, the Community Data Sheet outlines the stakes of the proposed Venice Community Plan for low-income residents, calling it out for favoring the interests of wealthier people who will move into the neighborhood once new, luxury developments are built and ensuring the displacement of the low-income residents who have called Venice home. In this way, the publication supports an argument for paying attention to the experience of marginalized voices in a community even if a more regional approach to housing development can be taken. The experiences described in the Community Data Sheet are the lived experiences missing from the community input Los Angeles claimed to have gathered to create the 1970 Venice Community Plan. In fact, a 1969 study³¹ preceding the proposed plan mentions "Differing Group Values" as a "community problem" and underlines the importance of understanding these groups to meet any goals set for Venice: "The analysis of the community revealed five separate socio-economic groups. Due to environmental factors, each group has a different set of values and generally exists independently of the others. It is imperative that a much greater degree of understanding and cooperation be achieved among these separate groups if Venice's problems are to be solved and its potentials finally realized."

By understanding the Community Data Sheet authors' concerns about luxury developments and their focus on building low-income housing current residents can rely on, planners can ensure that new housing production is not concentrated in certain parts of a neighborhood and also put in place housing affordability regulations or funding streams that support low-income housing where residents are calling for it. Without paying attention to these perspectives, planners also risk missing what matters to the many groups that comprise an inclusive community. The Community Data Sheet goes beyond expressing dissatisfaction with the tools of modern planning to express the pain and love that comes with one's connection to place and the threat of losing it.

Record 5: Venice Civic Improvement Union responds to the Venice Community Plan

- Date: Feb. 17, 1970
- Record Type: Letter from a grassroots organization advocating for Venice's low-income residents to Councilman Marvin Braude
- Authors: The Venice Civic Improvement Union (VCIU) and The Urban Concern (hired by the VCIU as planning consultants)

Who is speaking: The report is drafted by The Urban Concern, a planning consultancy hired by the Venice Civic Improvement Union (VCIU) to respond to the 1970 Venice Community Plan. The VCIU was led by Robert Castile, an African American man who marshalled the support of federal funding for his organization, which advocated for Oakwood's low-income residents. Castile would be seen by some as a polarizing figure, and his leadership was called into question by leaders of property owners organizations and Congressional representatives attempting to secure funding for the VCIU.

³¹ *Venice Community Plan Study*. plan study, CPC 14311, City of Los Angeles, July 1968. Huntington Library Archives, Southern California Regional Planning Collection.

Who is documenting and for what purpose: This letter was found in Councilman Braude's files, which are stored in the Los Angeles City Archives. In keeping these records, Braude and his staff may have been trying to show legitimacy for his decisions by showing the pressures he was under to make decisions, his polite style of communication with constituents (replying with gratitude for their input), and his rationale for making decisions. This may mean that records that don't put him in a positive light may not be included. These records were also subject to the archival standards of the Los Angeles city government over the course of more than five decades, and therefore some records may have been saved or discarded depending on an individual's definition of a record or the way in which they valued different stakeholders included in the files.

Gaps in this process through the speaker's positionality: The tone of this letter suggests the speaker feels as though they have an outsider's perspective on the community planning process. The report charges the process with not doing outreach within the community affected and not equipping the laudable goals outlined in the plan with any path toward implementing these goals. There is a deep skepticism about this process and anything related to it. It is challenging at best to understand whether these allegations of the community planning process are true from documents reviewed 50 years after the fact, but it is clear there is mistrust in this process that is deep-seated.

Referenced in the introduction of this thesis, the report drafted by The Urban Concern and submitted to Braude's office by the VCIU serves as an indictment of the community planning process' failure to include input from a large portion of Venice in the 1970 Venice Community Plan. Directly quoting objectives of the plan and the lack of provisions to carry them out, the report authors may agree in theory with some of the plan's objectives, but make an example out of the lack of any commitment to ensure they happen. The report references specific sections of the proposed plan and responds to them, calling out several instances in which opportunities to limit or regulate development have been missed, as in this sentence, which responds to the plan's objective of providing a guide to orderly and balanced development of Venice: "Without the needed restrictions and with the development plans being proposed for very few areas, the plan, if approved, would promote speculation and discourage any developmental control."

The report authors seem to assume that increases in density will largely result in high-end development, noting that the "blanket high density residential zone along the beach will surely result in a 'gold coast' strip of high rise structures reminiscent of Miami Beach at its worst. While developer interests need to be satisfied, a compromise development plan with clusters of multi-story structures separated by public open space could be financially, as well as visually, attractive." Any zones for which medium and high density is proposed are to be monitored closely, according to the report authors, and a series of community-driven development plans should accompany this one to ensure the plan's goals are realized: "These development plans should come from within the local community, the communities are well organized and several are capable of retaining their own planning advisors who would be needed in the plan effort. The community development plan should be at least as thorough as the investigation made by the City Planning Department for the beach developments."

In appealing to the technical language and types of changes used by professional planners, the VCIU's response may be seeking to transform outrage felt by the low-income community into demands that may be taken seriously by the Los Angeles planning regime.

However, its outright rejection of the proposed community plan and indictment of the community outreach process inserts the VCIU and its constituency in the conversation, resisting the efforts of the city-backed process to leave some voices out of the conversation. In this way, I believe this response embodies some of the liberatory memory work that Caswell supports *Urgent Archives*: a conscious resistance to the oppressive actions of institutions on minoritized groups, and efforts to make these groups visible in these processes through representational belonging.

The calls to both limit speculative development and pair the plan with community-driven development plans speak to the complexity of these demands, made out of concern for those at risk of displacement with new, high-end development along with the hope of seeding new building plans originating with the community most affected. Taken together with other demands for development restrictions in Venice, it is possible to see how this perspective may have amplified a slow-growth attitude supported by various groups across Venice. But the reasons the VCIU offers for this stance differ from those of property owners, as an example, as they are looking to support those finding and funding opportunities to build community-driven affordable housing. In this way, the VCIU's response demonstrates the nuance and variety of views expressed during the 1970 Venice Community Plan process, not unlike the way a variety of social movements, organizations, and leaders drove the community planning efforts in Harlem during the same time period, as documented by Goldstein. He argues the diversity of perspectives in Harlem led to disagreements about how to exercise community control over the built environment. It is not clear how exactly the diversity of perspectives offered in Venice interacted with each other, but it is certainly not fair to organize all the slow or no-growth advocacy under one category, as there were many concerns motivating those perspectives.

I argue that the complexity that the VCIU's response accepts – specifically, that development will happen and at least some of it should be controlled by the local community – is a hyper-local observation that should not be ignored in future planning for a community, even if and especially if a more regional approach is taken. The concerns motivating demands on a process are oftentimes more important than the demands themselves – in the case of the VCIU's response, the concerns speak to the lived experience of low-income residents who have been at risk of being displaced in multiple chapters of the city's history. The VCIU is strongly advocating for their input to be considered in the process, even after it has been ignored in the formation of a proposed 1970 Venice Community Plan.

1971-2 Venice Density Rollbacks

Record 6: Planners Report: Evaluation of Proposed Rollback from High Density to Low Density along Venice North Beach³²

- Date: Dec. 8, 1971
- Record Type: Report from community planner responding to a density rollback in North Venice Beach
- Author: Ken Norwood, community planner who is affiliated with UCLA

³² Norwood, Ken. *Planners Report: Evaluation of Proposed Rollback from High Density to Low Density along Venice North Beach*. Venice Community Planning Committee, 8 Dec. 1971. Special Collections & University Archives, California State University, Long Beach, Venice Collection, Box 19, Folder 10 (Community Design Center (CDC)).

Who is speaking: Ken Norwood, a white community planner who is affiliated with UCLA and educated in planning at USC. Norwood led the Venice Planning Organization for a few years, and tried to transition it into a Community Design Center, but the organization dissolved due to lack of funding from UCLA and support from partner organizations.³³

Who is documenting and for what purpose: This document was found in the California State University, Long Beach's Venice Collection. The entire Venice Collection was donated by the late Professor Arnold Springer, who was active in local politics in Venice Beach for decades and worked with many community groups over the years. Springer was a history professor at California State University, Long Beach, and was the author of the Venice History Project, a four-volume series covering different aspects of life in Venice Beach and biographical material for Abbot Kinney, the city's founder.³⁴

Gaps in this process through the speaker's positionality: This report offers a wider lens into grassroots organizations' activities in response to the 1970 Community Plan with a document that seems to originate outside city processes. Though the dislocation of low- and middle-income property owners and renters is referenced as a concern should high densities be allowed in North Beach, it is not clear how specific minority or low-income groups feel about these changes, as they are referenced broadly as people in need of housing that is neglected by the current plan.

In a report dated Dec. 6, 1971, community planner Ken Norwood provides an analysis and ultimately endorsement of a proposed rollback of the high-density zoning proposed for Venice's North Beach in the 1970 Venice Community Plan.³⁵ The seven-page report with maps identifies Venice as a lower density community surrounded by regional cities like Santa Monica and Long Beach with intensive high-rise commercial centers. It compares the impact of high-density zoning for Venice's beachfront district with that of a lower-density zoning. In the report, Norwood criticizes the lack of consistency between the 1970 Venice Community Plan, which proposed high density along the Venice beachfront, and the "centers concept" endorsed by the city's General Plan effort, in which low-density residential character is preserved except where higher density centers are encouraged: "The Centers Concept of low density residential between centers also reflects the regional pattern of community planning and development for smaller cities along the Southern California Coast. The Venice Community Planning Staff studied Coastal cities and found that low density residential zoning and development was the over whelming [sic] public policy, which high intensity development reserved for city center (Study available upon request) The public opinion in most of these cities (Santa Monica and Long Beach were exceptions as regional centers) against strip highrise along their beach fronts has prevailed, making those beaches

³³ Davidson, Rick. *Letter from Rick Davidson to Rex Lotery Regarding the Possibility of a Venice Community Design Center*. 13 Nov. 1973. Special Collections & University Archives, California State University, Long Beach, Box 19, Venice Collection, Community Design Center (CDC).

³⁴ Bloomquist, Chuck. "Arnold Springer – A Remembrance." *Free Venice Beachhead*, 14 Sept. 2021, <https://thevenicebeachhead.com/2021/09/14/arnold-springer-a-remembrance/>.

easily accessible for both local residents and general public users (2).” Norwood illustrates this distinction in a hand-drawn map, as seen in Image 2.

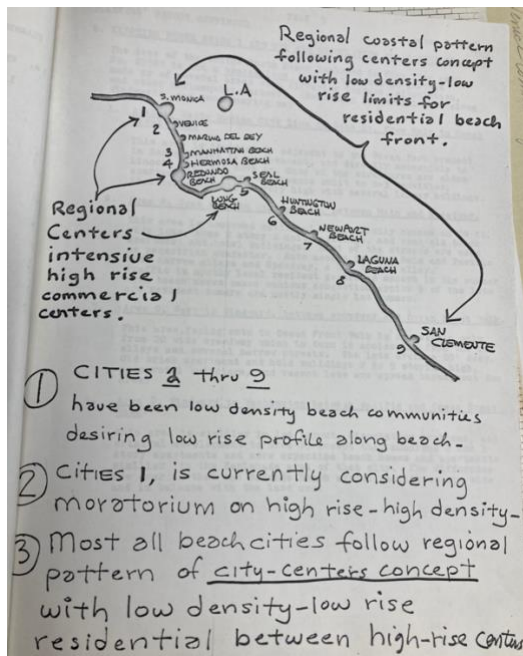


Image 2: Map included in Ken Norwood’s report “Planners Report: Evaluation of Proposed Rollback from High Density to Low Density along Venice North Beach”

In outlining the impacts of high-density zoning on Venice’s North Beach, Norwood charges the high-density zoning planned there as a “classic example of overzoning, a zoning practice of the thirties and forties for most Southern California cities (4).” By justifying itself as a way for higher density zoning to rejuvenate an older area, the practice has ensured that the Los Angeles population can increase to 10 million, argues Norwood, who also takes issue with the speculative buying that has been sparked by the multi-family high density zoning there: “The multi-family high density overzoning along Venice North Beach resulted in speculative buying and selling, absentee ownership, and the long term blighting process of unkempt properties, transient tenants and encroachment of large buildings next to single family houses.” Visual barriers created by the high-rises, decreased public access to the beach, traffic congestion, and dislocation of low- and moderate-income residents by higher-income people are among the other problems Norwood believes this level of density poses for North Beach.

Norwood’s focus on the concentrated costs and diffuse benefits of new developments implicates a dynamic that Einstein argues can turn long-time residents into neighborhood defenders. In this case, it is not clear from this document whether Norwood is a resident of Venice Beach but it seems his focus is on protecting and providing for existing residents of Venice Beach, almost without consideration for any volume of newcomers likely to gather there given the “wind and wave” of Venice that has attracted so many already. The downzoning he advocates for mirrors the protective zoning strategies many cities across California were advocating for at the time, as documented by Dougherty’s *Golden Gates*. As real estate came to constitute a larger share of household wealth, more and more suburbs took up growth moratoria to preserve home values for property owners. In Norwood’s case, the push for less growth in Venice may be rooted in an intention to

eliminate the threat of high-rises for lower income residents, but it ultimately would help ensure a limited housing supply and higher home prices that would become especially challenging for these residents to afford.

Norwood's short-lived tenure as a community planner in Venice also demonstrates the challenges of the community design center model. As described by Goldstein in *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, despite the intentions of C. Richard Hatch, the white professional planner turned community planner in Harlem, to empower the low-income communities of Harlem to plan on their own terms, he was ultimately replaced as leader of the Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem due to disagreements with community leaders about how to usher in this vision and their commitment to community control (Hatch did not live in Harlem). Norwood was ousted as leader of the Venice Community Design Center, which operated as the Venice Planning Organization, after a couple short years amid allegations that the organization was serving "rich, white property owners."³⁶

A priority for Norwood seems to be the plight of low- and middle-income residents should North Venice Beach realize the potential of the high density zoning included in the 1970 Venice Community Plan. Despite this, Norwood seems to advocate for a strategy ensuring that these residents will find it harder and harder to stay there, one in which any zones where high density had been considered are downzoned to the point where little to no growth is allowed in Venice. Norwood's approach to advocating for this stance employs technical language and a professional planners' sensibility, but ultimately his stance is rooted in the hyper-local. Imbued with the belief that Venice is unique in its low-density character and that other regional centers can absorb growth for the region, Norwood's commitment to slow or no growth in Venice demonstrates the attitudes contributing to the disastrous effects of restrictive zoning in California's cities and in many cities across the United States.

³⁶ Davidson, Rick. *Letter from Rick Davidson to Rex Lotery Regarding the Possibility of a Venice Community Design Center*. 13 Nov. 1973. Special Collections & University Archives, California State University, Long Beach, Box 19, Venice Collection, Community Design Center (CDC).

V. Conclusion

Venice would go on to adopt another Community Plan in 1988, with one to follow in 2000 (Morrow 26). Regardless of what changes were and were not tolerated by these plans, Venice's multi-family zoning would drop more than 18% between 1970 and 1990, and its single-family zoning dropped more than 8% in the same time period, according to Morrow's dissertation analysis (Morrow 136). Morrow argues the combination of a lack of overall city growth plan and density rollbacks fought for and achieved in many of the city's 35 community plan areas after 1970, Los Angeles' planned population was reduced from 10 million to roughly 4 million. Though the 35 community plans comprising Los Angeles' Land Use Element allowed for an increase of some 390,000 people between 1970 and 2000, the actual population increase during that time was nearly 900,000 (Morrow 2-4).

Between 1960 and 2010, the population of the Venice Community Plan Area would decrease from 38,373 to 36,962, a drop of 4%, according to a report on Census data trends in Venice prepared by Pacific Urbanism for the Venice Neighborhood Council (Rodman-Alvarez 3). The inflation-adjusted median household income rose from \$45,760 in 1960 to \$79,745 in 2010, an increase of 74% (Rodman-Alvarez 3). One wonders what those active in the years preceding and following Venice's first community planning process more than 50 years ago would make of these statistics. How much of the neighborhood they sought to preserve would they see in today's Venice Beach, where the median home sale price was \$1.9 million in February of 2022, according to the real estate website Redfin.³⁷ Where a mix of artist studios, thrift stores, political organizations, and nonprofits were once clustered on West Washington Boulevard decades ago, there are now clothing boutiques and upscale restaurants fronting what is now infamously named Abbot Kinney Boulevard.³⁸

In attempting to illustrate the distance and proximity between what some were asking for during the community planning process and what actually took shape there, my intention is not trap individuals or groups in their past words. It is rather to demonstrate a disconnection in what could serve as a feedback loop between attitudes reflected in a planning process and the outcomes of these planning processes. In Venice, a confluence of groups and ideas about the future surfaced a wide range of intentions, including preserving low-income housing, working against the displacement of low-income residents, removing "blight," and environmental concerns. Many approaching the conversation from different principles ended up advocating for a similar stance – to limit development across the neighborhood. This approach would become codified in the 1970 community planning and the subsequent zoning rollback effort in 1972, and it would be successfully implemented in Venice. Plans do not necessarily usher in specific outcomes, but perhaps in Venice, this plan was undergirded by such strong sentiment that perhaps it was too successful. The Venice of today would certainly not satisfy the calls to protect low-income residents from displacement. Though it might have initially pleased those looking for a healthy property value increase, it's possible the dynamic exceeded what could even be beneficial to them – could their children or grandchildren afford to live there, would they be able to retire there with fixed incomes?

As Einstein and her co-authors contend in *Neighborhood Defenders*, many of the same slow- or no-growth sentiments are dominating localized decisions on housing in municipalities across the

³⁷ <https://www.redfin.com/neighborhood/2861/CA/Los-Angeles/Venice/housing-market>

³⁸ Deener, Andrew. "Commerce as the Structure and Symbol of Neighborhood Life: Reshaping the Meaning of Community in Venice, California." *City & Community*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2007, pp. 291–314. *ProQuest*, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.mit.edu/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2007.00229.x>.

United States, entrenched by relative power property owners have over the available strategies to influence local planning processes. Dougherty's *Golden Gates* helps us to understand the longer-term consequences of these decisions, and that a way forward in our national housing crisis may lie in the combination of measures that aim to prevent displacement, like rent control, and in facilitating more residential development of all types in all communities.

Now that we are in a position to observe the long-term effects of increasingly restrictive housing policies – especially as we see the scale at which these local policies affect regions, states and the country at large – I believe it is more important than ever to approach housing production from a regional perspective. Under current planning regimes, public processes, and market conditions, cities will continue to enact restrictive housing policies and allow a limited set of wealthier property owners to influence whether proposed housing developments are allowed in a given jurisdiction. Stronger mandates to build housing from higher levels of government can unlock this protective instinct, and a realignment of expectations about how much housing is needed and how all jurisdictions will contribute to those goals is necessary to move forward. However, as we turn to a larger-scale sensibility for planning for the housing we need now and in the future, the planning practice cannot do so at the expense of marginalized communities. A reconsideration of whose voices are assigned the most weight in local planning processes may a step in this direction. But without a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of communities historically ignored by planning processes, the planning practice cannot expect build housing in an inclusive or equitable manner, nor can it expect to account for the harms of large-scale housing development under programs like urban renewal.

This leaves us with a question – are there ways to improve the planning process to account for these tensions, to allow them to exist simultaneously and inform each other? I hesitate to offer anything termed a solution. Much study and practice has been dedicated to infusing planning processes with a participatory framework and leveling the power dynamics between those representing government and those not typically represented in these processes. I do find in David Schleicher's 2013 law review article "City Unplanning" a path toward unlocking the stalemate caused by property-owning interests in local planning and housing decisions.³⁹ Acknowledging a growing consensus that the more restrictive zoning policies that have been adopted by cities in the last three decades or so have strained housing markets and housing affordability, Schleicher examines the rise of "localist" policymaking, in which the preferences of local residents are weighed more heavily than citywide preferences on housing. In part because party allegiances are not as strong a factor in city government, individual elected officials are often choosing between options that might advance citywide goals and those that protect their district. Development proposals are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and this allows for a system that Schleicher terms "councilmanic courtesy" by which all members of an elected body informally decide to match their vote with that of the officials whose district is affected by the land-use decision.

The challenges of building coalitions within city government on issues like housing could be addressed by creating an annual zoning budget determining the total amount by which housing must increase across the city in a given year, argues Schleicher. Until the goal is met, the city could prohibit downzonings. By frontloading an aggregate housing mandate for the city, this process could take the pressure off individual development project decisions in specific districts, and incentivize developers to fight for a larger citywide budget. This could align better with the interest of housing consumers, especially those who have yet to move into a city, as well as benefit smaller developers

³⁹ Schleicher, David. "City Unplanning." *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 122, no. 7, 2013, pp. 1670–737. [mit.primo.exlibrisgroup.com, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1990353](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1990353).

who may struggle with the cost of fighting local opposition to smaller-scale developments. Schleicher also proposes something he terms a Tax Increment Local Transfer (TILT), which would take a portion of the tax increment provided by a new development and pay that back to property holders in the development's district in the form of property tax rebates for a specified timeframe. This is expected to temper some opposition to the project while preventing the price of building the development from skyrocketing. Schleicher's third proposal is to offer neighbors of an upzoning or development a form of political insurance against the impact of those land use changes by way of a community board that can determine a mitigation plan in the event of greater-than-expected spillover effects. This would provide neighbors assurance that if they allow new development, they can achieve redress for excessive negative impacts.

As another path toward a planning process more cognizant of future needs, I wonder if the planning practice can take some cues from the epistemologies embedded in community archives as described by Caswell in *Urgent Archives*. Caswell's framework for the liberatory memory work that community archives use in encouraging active participation of community members, activating records for mobilization in the present, and creating space for representational belonging opens up many possibilities for planners to deepen their understanding of marginalized communities' needs and the ways in which they have been planning for their own futures. Having historically been the groups that have been burdened by planning processes that were not inclusive, minoritized communities employ languages and strategies to preserve their memories and enact their futures despite the corrosive effects of programs like urban renewal on their communities. Records like the Community Data Sheet express the emotional impact of this kind of planning with a range of emotions, including rage, care, respect, disrespect, and a love for their communities and sense of place. The fidelity to these experiences is invaluable to planners trying to find a way forward after years of an ongoing housing shortage. Perhaps the orientation toward a loving attachment toward place offered by Annalise Fonza in her essay "Through the Fire: Womanism, Feminism, and the Dialectics of Loving Attachment"⁴⁰ describes what is needed on this front best: "A theory of planning based on loving attachment, as opposed to one based on detachment and disconnection from others, has to be truly relational and demonstrated in partnership with those who have not only been invisible, but who have been disillusioned or disappointed by the promises of planning tools and techniques hailed as progress." Through records like the Community Data Sheet, the letter by V.M. Hall asking for the code enforcement program to stop wreaking havoc on low-income seniors' lives, and the VCIU's response in advocating for community-based development plans, we can see the rootedness of the lived experience in their demands. We get a glimpse into the window of how these minoritized groups planned sustainability for their futures, even when they were counted out of "official" planning processes.

What if we were able to collectively decide on how much housing is needed, to have the types of conversations across time and space that the *Community Data Sheet* facilitates? How could the hopes and dreams that the many layers of ancestors of a place shine through the forward-looking visions we develop for its future? In the end, it is not about the number of developments that get built or whether there is a recreation center or a parking lot in that part of town. But it is about who is considered when we account for the past, present, and future of a place, and whether that place is truly inclusive of all who may want to call that place home.

⁴⁰ Porter, Libby et al. "What's Love Got To Do With It? Illuminations on Loving Attachment in Planning." *Planning Theory & Practice* 13.4 (2012): 593–627. Web.

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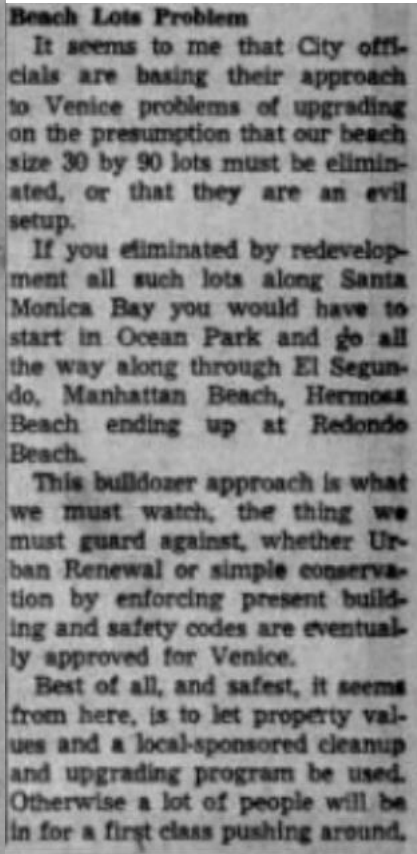
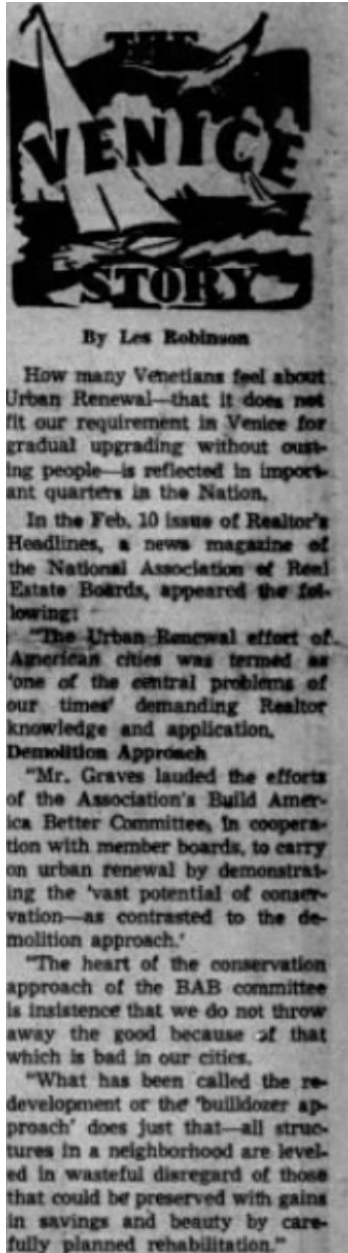
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Zitnick, David. 18 May 1966. Los Angeles City Archive, Erwin C. Piper Technical Center, Box D439, Venice rehabilitation (65-66).

Record 1: *Evening Vanguard* Manager Weighs In

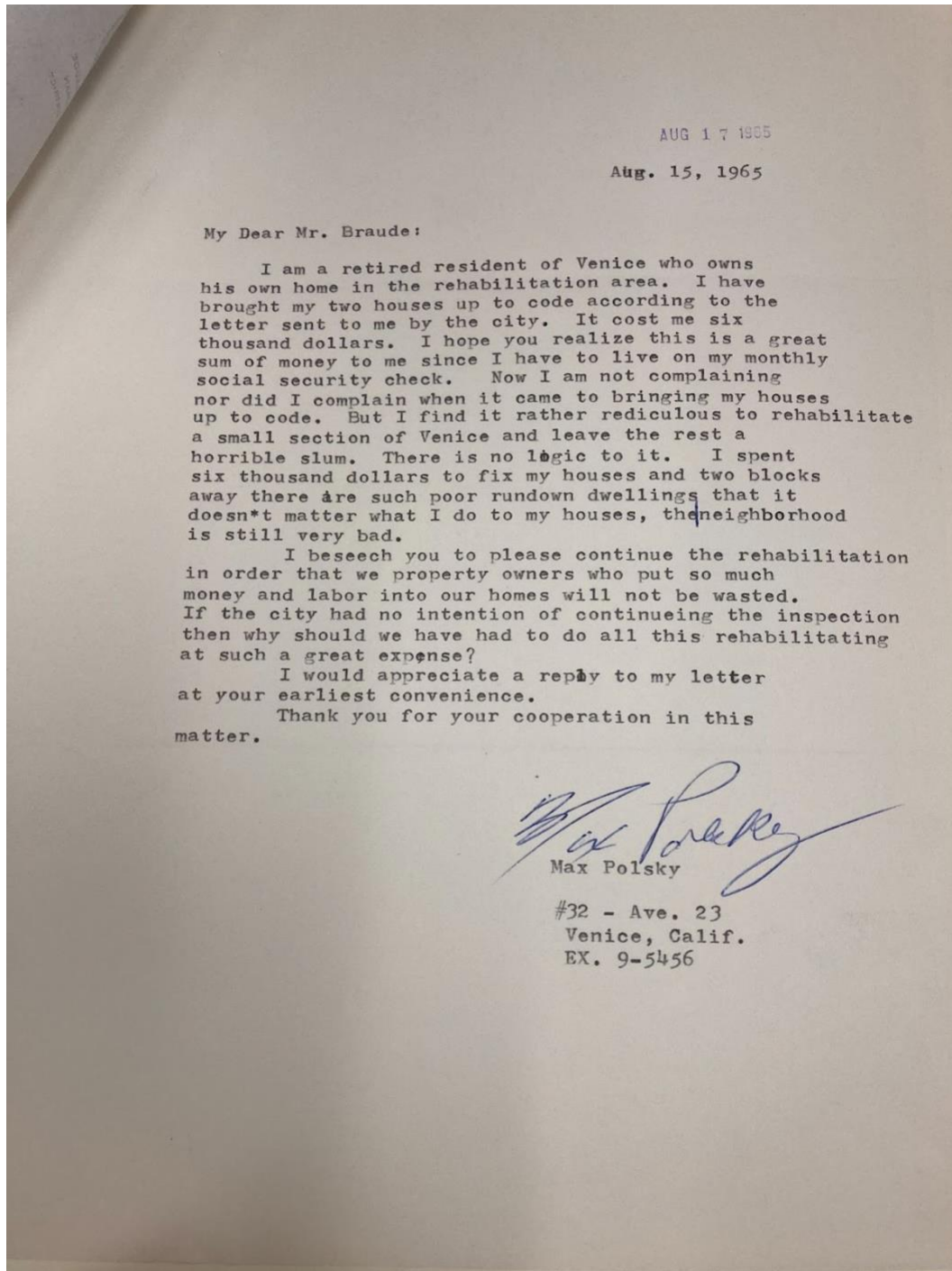
- Title: “The Venice Story”⁴¹
- Date: Feb. 14, 1958
- Record Type: Opinion column in daily newspaper
- Author: Les Robinson, manager of the *Evening Vanguard*



⁴¹ Robinson, Les. "The Venice Story." *Evening Vanguard*, 14 Feb. 1958. newspapers.com.

Record 2: Letter from Max Polsky to Councilman Braude regarding code enforcement

- Date: Aug. 15, 1965
- Record Type: Letter from Venice Beach resident to Councilman Marvin Braude
- Author: Max Polsky, retired resident of Venice Beach, owner of two homes, claims dependency on Social Security checks



Record 3: Letter from Mrs. V.M. Hall to Councilman Braude asking to end code enforcement

- Date: March 31, 1966
- Record Type: Letter from Venice Beach resident to Councilman Marvin Braude
- Author: V.M. Hall, a Venice Beach resident

March 31, 1966 MVR 5 1966

Councilman Marvin Braude,
West Los Angeles City Hall,
Burdick Street,
Los Angeles.

Dear Mr. Braude,

Further to our conversation yesterday about the proposed continuation of the rehabilitation project in Venice, the answer from the point of view of the little people is no, do not continue it. Please accept my thanks as one of your constituents, for having opposed both it and the highway on the beach.

In relation to the rehabilitation as it was practiced and would be again, the net effect of it was that it took the homes away from people who had bought and paid for them legitimately, who expected to live in them the rest of their lives and who under a democracy, had every legitimate right to expect to be able to do so.

The land was taken from them and made available at the lowest possible price to land buyers.

The mechanism was this. The inspectors came around and the old person was in due course presented with a letter which said in effect that he must spend thousands of dollars - say \$7000 - by a certain date or get out.

Many of the old people concerned had no \$7000 to spend. They were living on the proceeds of savings, which due to inflation (again no fault of theirs) was little enough, or they were living on social security. In many cases the only thing that they actually owned was their home.

Loan companies would not lend money to people too old to earn and with a pittance for an income. Caught in this position they had to either abandon their property or sell it. Many became so distressed by the situation that their already old constitutions could not adapt to it, and they simply had strokes or heart attacks and they died.

Others who had a little money, being pressed by the deadline to do something about which they had little knowledge, turned their money over to contractors or others who represented themselves as being able to solve the problem. In many cases the 'builders' simply disappeared with the money. In other cases the contractors went broke, and claimed they had no money with which to complete the job. The old people had neither the money nor the energy to pursue them legally. The old people had to 'take it' and of course, they couldn't. I am sure you will find many of them in the state mental institution where, if you have ever cared to look, you will have seen rows and rows of such old people, waiting only to die.

But these people of Venice had no reason to expect an old age of that kind

They had provided carefully for an old age by the beach, by saving their money, buying a home, making it comfortable, and in every way conforming to the pattern of behavior that our society expects.

For this they had their homes wrenched from them and were thrown out into the street without enough money to live decently, even if they had the heart to begin again.

And this was done to them by their city government.

Regularly the houses that they were forced to abandon caught on fire. I was told that this was done by 'winos' who entered the building and went to sleep smoking, and who were never apprehended and never were so asleep that they burst to death in the building that they had ignited.

I am forced to conclude that Venice winos are a very methodical and alert bunch, who delight in destroying the places that supposedly provide them with a refuge.

The result of course of the burning, was that the owner was required to tear down the building which, by the fact that it had caught on fire, had obviously become a public nuisance.

He was thus prevented from either being able to rehabilitate the building himself or sell it to someone who could. Only by lowering the price to the minimum value of the land could he expect to sell it. That value would be about \$9000 of which he had already had to spend \$1000 for demolition, and you know how much \$8000 will buy you in terms of housing at this time.

Rehabilitation as it was practiced in Venice is in the interests of the land speculator only. It is like laying out an animal carcass for the vultures, and that carcass is made up of the lives and hopes of the people of the area being 'rehabilitated'.

If the city cared about its citizens it would not improve their living conditions by a process that destroys their lives.

The demands of the rehabilitation amounted to an exorbitant, arbitrary and unequal levy. It was a land grab in which land was taken from the poor and given to the rich.

Had the city had a genuine concern with living conditions, slums would never have developed. If they had a genuine concern now, they would be providing decent housing for the residents of those areas, instead of forcing poor people from their homes in Venice into the low priced, over crowded slum areas in other parts of town, to make those areas even more congested.

The answer on the rehabilitation question as it has been practiced and as it is proposed, is definitely no.

The function of the council is to promote human values first, and commercial values only secondarily. When they fail to do that, they betray their trust.

Congratulations on your stand against the 'beach freeway' which we do not need and do not want, and I can only wish that the public would be kept as

Yours truly,
V.M. Hall
(Mrs.) V. M. Hall
18 Horizon, Venice

well informed about what you are doing for them, as they are about what Elizabeth Taylor is doing for Richard Burton.

Record 4: Community Data Sheet, publication that seeks to represent all voices in Venice and takes a critical stance toward the Venice Community Plan process

- Title: The Community Data Sheet, with a "Sounds of Venice" section
- Date: Aug. 15, 1969
- Record Type: Newspaper publication with news articles and opinion pieces
- Authors: Various, bylines include Curtis Rossiter (editor?), Mary Ellen Garrity, Dorothy Fleming, Henry Hansman, Margie Legans, Beverly Lewis, D. F. Wright, Bob Yaller



SOUNDS OF VENICE

AUGUST 15, 1969

VOLUME 1

Why Black Community Needs Newspaper

As I write this article, I do not write as a non-resident, or an uninvolved citizen, or as an individual with a high opinion that has not developed and tested opinions. Therefore, I feel that I have the right to give my own views as to why the black community needs a newspaper.

In this article I am outlining reasons specific to that question. As the black community has been automatically been spoken for by the white community and even now that they try to speak for black people, it is time to give the black community a voice to reinstate that white voice for and about blacks.

The black community of Los Angeles needs a voice that speaks to their needs and concerns. The major newspaper in the city is not only a white owned publication but also a white controlled publication that is not only not a part of the black community but also not a part of the black struggle.

The white establishment never does want to share the black struggle. It wants to keep the black struggle as its own. The black struggle is not only a struggle for liberation but also a struggle for survival. To survive all poor people from Oakland to Los Angeles must have a voice to speak for their needs and concerns. It is time for the black community to be heard near the people. That is the voice that the poor people must have and it is the reality to which the black community must be subjected. We must know the truth.

The black community needs a newspaper that is capable of bringing unity to the black struggle. In the black community there are many who do not have a voice to speak for their needs and concerns. This newspaper is needed to give a voice to the black community and to help them to organize and fight for their needs and concerns.

The black community needs a newspaper that is capable of bringing unity to the black struggle. In the black community there are many who do not have a voice to speak for their needs and concerns. This newspaper is needed to give a voice to the black community and to help them to organize and fight for their needs and concerns.



They look calm now, but.....

Venice Go Wild

The Venice Division of the Los Angeles Police Department is consistently over-reacting to situations in the black community. This over-reaction has taken such forms as harassment for minor traffic violations to severe beatings of emotional and physical abuse on black individuals.

These beatings have occurred on many street corners in Venice. These corners are usually at the Venice Jail. A time at the Venice Jail, a young black woman was thrown to the ground and kicked in the side by police officers.

Attorney General Ramsey Clark stated: "If all violence, riots and violence in excess of authority...

In the next installment it will report the public when the police violate the law, the charge can be raised for law. The law must first be established.

The black community is outraged at this type of behavior which has been going on for many years in the ghetto. The non-black treatment experienced by black people is not only physical but also mental. The amount of racial prejudice and hatred has been little known for the black community.

The police department has been in touch with the black community and has been treating them as enemies. There are too many instances where police officers are being violent by force against the black community. The police officers are being violent and abusive in their processes.

Community workers on the streets of Venice have been harassed and beaten. It is time to speak for the black community.

Community workers have been harassed and beaten. It is time to speak for the black community.

Citizens Fight Against Master Plan

Various citizens' groups in Venice are continuing to oppose the proposed Venice Master Plan, which is expected to come before the Los Angeles City Council in the near future.

The Master Plan, which was prepared by the Los Angeles City Planning Department, is an outline for the future of the Venice community over the next twenty years. It calls for the development of Venice into a fashionable residential and beach resort community, with high-rise apartments and hotels along the beach and smaller apartments and homes east of Washington Boulevard.

The plan also calls for the construction of a hotel-resort project on the site of the old Pacific Ocean Park. If the Master Plan is approved, the City of Los Angeles will have set the stamp of approval on this smaller redevelopment for Venice.

From SOUNDS of VENICE Journalism Workshop

WHY I WANT TO BE A JOURNALIST

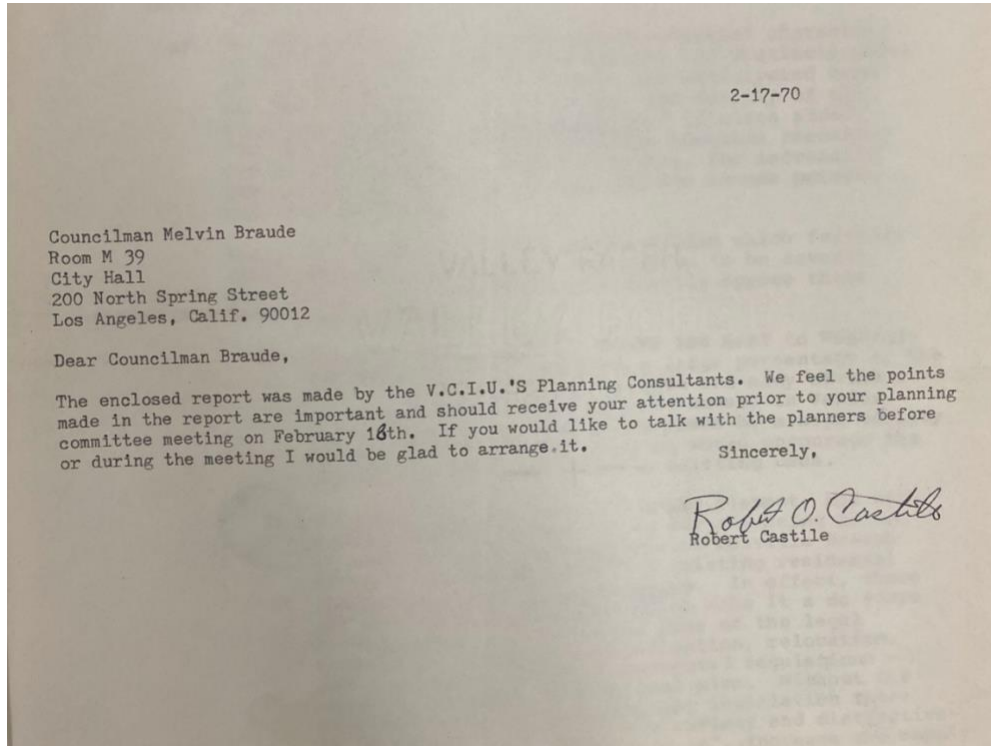
I would like to be a journalist because I would like for once to see the truth about Venice. And I feel that we the people of Venice, need a newspaper owned and published by us. I also think that if we set up our own newspaper we won't have to depend upon second class news. I also think that if we start the newspaper and prove it to be a success, then a lot of other activities would be set up, such as journalism and printing classes. Maybe if we set a good example many other teen-agers will want to follow.

Dawn In The Ghetto

We are children,
We like our dirt,
Only because we have to live here.
We can not move,
All up to the...

Record 5: Venice Civic Improvement Union responds to the Venice Community Plan

- Date: Feb. 17, 1970
- Record Type: Letter from a grassroots organization advocating for Venice's low-income residents to Councilman Marvin Braude
- Authors: The Venice Civic Improvement Union (VCIU) and The Urban Concern (hired by the VCIU as planning consultants)



from the office of:

THE URBAN CONCERN
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING/URBAN DESIGN
1516 Westwood Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90024

VENICE COMMUNITY PLAN ANALYSIS

1. Under the section "Objectives of the Plan" (p. GP-3) there are several statements which are not satisfied by the plan, among these incongruities are:

- a) "3. To preserve and enhance the residential character of Venice and to maintain the variety and distinctiveness of its living areas. To fulfill the anticipated need for housing of such types, sizes, and density of all economic segments of the community." (italics added)
"To actively seek out and encourage adequate resources and methods public as well as private, for increasing the supply of standard housing for low income persons residing in Venice."

There is no segment of the proposed plan which fulfills these objectives, in fact, there seems to be several portions of the plan which specifically oppose these objectives, namely:

- 1) The area along Pacific Avenue and east to Washington Boulevard now contains a large percentage of the elderly inhabitants of the area and many of the more distinctive and desirable houses in Venice. The plan proposes that these areas be a high density residential zone, a zone which would encourage the removal of the lower density existing uses.

- 2) The plan does not have a housing element, and with a large number of low income persons being forced to vacate (Planning Commissioner Melville Branch has put the figure at 90% of existing residents) there is no plan for relocation. In effect, there are elements of this plan which make it a de facto renewal plan, but there are none of the legal safeguards - resident participation, relocation, equal opportunity and governmental regulations - which are present in a renewal plan. Without the broader powers of redevelopment legislation there is no way to "...maintain the variety and distinctiveness of its living areas" or to "...increase the supply of standard housing for low income persons residing in Venice."

THE URBAN CONCERN

From Hi Rise

- b) "2. To provide a guide to an orderly and balanced development of Venice." Without the needed restrictions and with development plans being proposed for very few areas, the plan, if approved, would promote speculation and discourage any developmental control.

- c) "4.a" designating land for the full range of needed retail, service and office facilities in quantities based on accepted standards and in appropriate patterns. Almost all of the proposed commercially zoned land is in strip pattern, serving to segregate various residential areas and creating barriers for neighborhood interaction.

- d) "7. To fully achieve the potential of the Venice Beach as a recreational area available to both local residents and people of the entire Los Angeles region, through appropriate development of both recreational and access facilities." The existing and proposed development, especially in the area between Brooks Avenue and Venice Boulevard, discourages access and use of the beach by residents east of Washington Boulevard. There are a series of land use barriers (commercial, high density residential, commercial - commercial/manufacturing), which when coupled by the fact that there are no through street to the beach makes access very difficult indeed.

2. Under the "Standards and Criteria" (p. GP-4) of the plan a population projection of 84,000 persons is noted. A large portion of this population would live in the high density areas which in the plan are specified as 41+ dwelling units/acre, under R4 zoning the "41+" could be 108 units/acre and under R5 zoning, 216 units/acre would be possible, and the 84,000 population figure could be easily doubled. In an area where congestion already exists there are no significant controls on limiting future growth.

3. Under "Features of the Plan" (p. GP-6)

- a) "Residential..As various efforts are made to upgrade the housing standards and eliminate blight, the needs of the existing residents must be met, wherever possible, so as not to cause unnecessary hardships or severe relocation problems. New housing in these neighborhoods should make allowance for the modest incomes and limited rent paying abilities of the inhabitants." This is exactly what is required, however, there has been no official communication in order to determine... the needs of the existing residents... nor is there any program or guarantee to provide new housing.

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- b) Commercial (p. GP-6) The strip developments along Lincoln Boulevard, the beach and Washington Boulevard will be retained. Mention is made to expansion of commercial and parking uses on to the abandoned Railway tracks, a needed improvement. This type of proposed conversion has been difficult to implement in the past and some sort of detailed plan will be required.

A portion of the area along Washington Boulevard, about 4 square blocks, is proposed for rezoning to a commercial-manufacturing zone - this use would be detrimental in that it would create a barrier along Washington Boulevard, which would not be oriented to the residential areas along its periphery. There seems to be some additional need for convenience commercial - especially in the medium density residential areas, this could best be handled by the proposed "Q" zone classification.

- c) Industrial (p. GP-7) "They (industrial zones) are intended for only limited and restricted types of industry, which will not cause nuisance to other types of use on adjacent lands." Under the ultimate development plan there seems to be little point in preserving the industrial zone at 4th and Rose - there are only 2 blocks of land, it is surrounded by medium density residential and is directly adjacent to the only area proposed for a federally sponsored, low income housing project. While the existing uses in good condition to industrial does not seem warranted; a variance under a different use category or the limiting nature of the proposed "Q" zone seems more appropriate. The same reasoning holds true for the 4-block area at the north-east corner of Venice and Westminster Avenue (or one of the parallel streets in the same vicinity) should be improved and made continuous in order to link the residential areas north of Washington Boulevard to the beach.

- d) Circulation (p. GP-7) The soon to be released traffic study, which includes this area, should be the authoritative guide to a comprehensive circulation. From an access point of view, Brooks Avenue and Westminster Avenue (or one of the parallel streets in the same vicinity) should be improved and made continuous in order to link the residential areas north of Washington Boulevard to the beach.

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An improvement and extension of Ocean Avenue, (for access and linkage more than for carrying of large traffic volumes), should be studied as well.

4. Other Analysis

- a) Proposed Code Revisions - A controlled Vertical Zoning and Urban Design Standards are needed steps in the right direction of better community planning. The industrial zone parking buffers are not feasible in several areas (due to existing structures) and do not seem as logical as the eventual elimination or complete landscaped screening of the small existing pockets of industrial land.
- b) Beach orientation, additional studies should be made in order to increase the linkage between the community (north of Washington Boulevard) and the beach areas. A series of esplanades or parks, or even the continuation of several streets would be helpful. A detailed development plan for the area along Washington Boulevard (between Brooks Avenue and Venice Boulevard) is mandatory.
- c) The high and medium density areas should be studied in greater detail in order to allow for resident participation, the provision of open space and the promotion of internal circulation.
- d) As has been mentioned before, the proposed Pacific Coast Freeway will be a major planning and urban design factor. affecting all land uses, circulation, property values, etc. The State Division of Highways is making corridor studies and although the freeway is somewhat unpopular, it will in all probability, be constructed on schedule, the question of where it will be located and how its detrimental impact can be minimized must be answered as soon as possible.

- e) The blanket high density residential zone along the beach will surely result in a "gold coast" strip of high rise structures reminiscent of Miami Beach at its worst. While developer interests need to be satisfied, a compromise development plan with clusters of multi-story structures separated by public open space could be financially, as well as visually, attractive.

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- f) Although some discussion of rehabilitation of existing residential areas is discussed in the plan, and methods utilizing federal funds are suggested for achieving such ends, there is no evidence to suggest that the City Planning Department or the Community Redevelopment Agency have attempted to meet with representative community groups and explain the options available under such programs. Further, no recognition seems to have been given to the present housing programs of community agencies in the area. One positive factor in this respect is the recommendation (pp. GP-13 & 14) that a housing element be a first priority item in the development of the detailed community plan. This statement was, chronologically, an afterthought and rather than being a priority item of a later phase of planning, it should be a vital element of the plan itself.

5. Conclusion

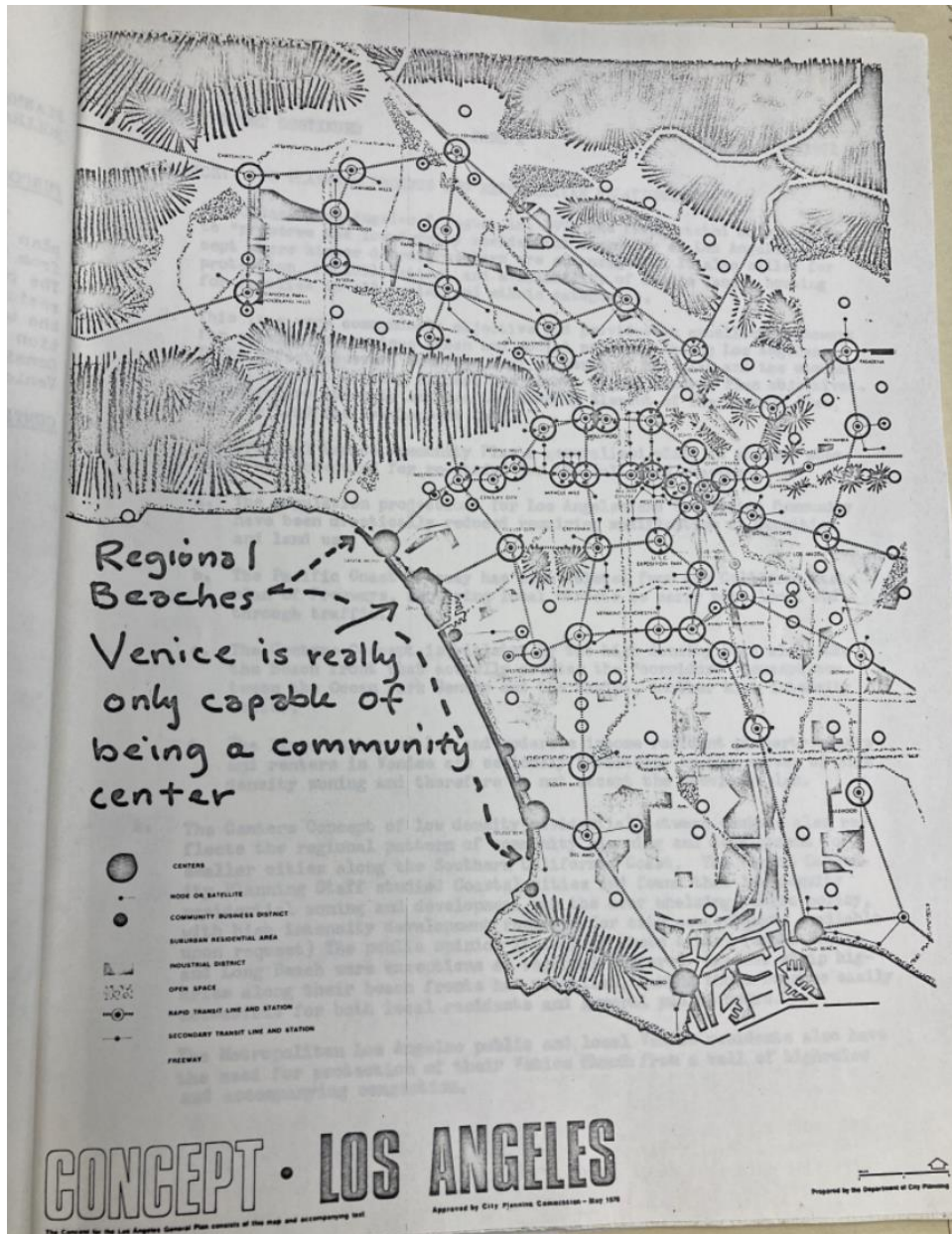
- a) The general objectives of a new Venice community have been correctly identified by the proposed community plan, but there is no way of providing for them under the plan.
- b) A series of development plans covering the entire Venice community is required before identified objectives can be realized.
- c) These development plans should come from within the local community, the communities are well organized and several are capable of retaining their own planning advisors who would be needed in the plan effort. The community development plans should be at least as thorough as the investigations made by the City Planning Department for the beach developments.
- d) The additional time which is required to complete the planning task will be well worth benefits of an accepted workable plan and a harmonious city-community relationship.

If it is truly the desire of the City Planning Department to provide a plan "transform (Venice) from a partially blighted area to a 'model' beach-oriented community comprising a diversity of ethnic groups, incomes, life-styles and physical surroundings" (p. GP-8), it will not be accomplished with this plan.

Probably the key question is: "Why can't a plan which truly recognizes the specific concerns of the resident community and the development interests be produced?" There is increasing evidence throughout the country that planners, politicians, and developers must develop a new sensitivity to the concerns of people as well as to the problem of pollution, beautification and all of the other aspects of our environment.

Record 6: Planners Report: Evaluation of Proposed Rollback from High Density to Low Density along Venice North Beach

- Date: Dec. 8, 1971
- Record Type: Report from community planner responding to a density rollback in North Venice Beach
- Author: Ken Norwood, community planner who is affiliated with UCLA



PLANNERS REPORT: EVALUATION OF PROPOSED
 ROLLBACK FROM HIGH DENSITY TO LOW DENSITY ALONG VENICE NORTH BEACH

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study is concerned with evaluating the Planning Department's alternative plan for changing the existing R-5, R-4, R-3 and C-2 zones to RD 1.5 in the area from Washington Street to Navy and from Main and Pacific to the Ocean Front Walk. The problem of continued unabated development of the long standing high density residential zoning (R-5, R-4, R-3), the impact of accompanying traffic congestion, the use of the beach by other metropolitan Los Angeles people, and the preservation of the unique cultural-ethnic mix of Venice will be covered in this study. Consideration will also be given to the relationship of North Beach to the total Venice Community and the Los Angeles General Plan.

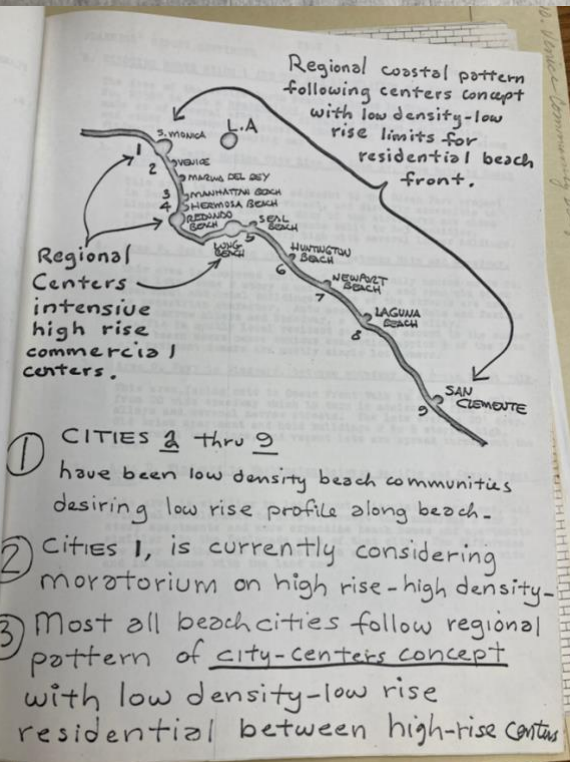
CONTENTS:

- A. THE VENICE COMMUNITY AND THE LOS ANGELES GENERAL PLAN.
- B. EXISTING NORTH BEACH LANDUSE AND CIRCULATION CHARACTERISTICS.
- C. IMPACT OF CONTINUED HIGH DENSITY ZONING.
- D. IMPACT OF LOW DENSITY RD 1.5 ZONING.
- E. TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION.
- F. CONCLUSIONS.
- G. APPENDIX.

A. VENICE: THE PLANNING PROCESS AND METROPOLITAN RELATIONSHIPS.

1. In "Concept Los Angeles," August 18, 1970 the first stated objective is to "preserve the low density residential character of Los Angeles, except where higher density centers are encouraged". It also called for protection, rehabilitation, and availability of single family housing for families in all social and ethnic categories.
2. This is a very commendable objective and provides an excellent framework for solving the serious urban and social problems facing Los Angeles. To be effect however, the technical elements of the plan and the community plans must closely express the intent of the General Plan objectives. We therefore strongly and use the Housing Element of the General Plan, and the Land Use Development Code.
3. The original Venice Community Plan a generalized plan, is already obsolete (now scheduled for re-study) for the following reasons:
 - a. The population projections for Los Angeles and the Venice Community have been drastically reduced requiring modification of densities and land use.
 - b. The Pacific Coast Freeway has been deleted from the California State plan of Freeways, requiring local streets to carry both local and through traffic.
 - c. The Centers Concept is violated by the high density band along the beach front that actually creates the "corridor" concept between the Ocean Park Center and the Marina, another high intensity center.
 - d. The large number of low and moderate income resident property owners and renters in Venice are seriously threatened by the excess of high density zoning and therefore do not accept the previous plan.
4. The Centers Concept of low density residential between centers also reflects the regional pattern of community planning and development for smaller cities along the Southern California Coast. The Venice Community Planning Staff studied Coastal cities and found that low density residential zoning and development was the over whelming public policy, with high intensity development reserved for city center (Study available upon request) The public opinion in most of these cities (Santa Monica and Long Beach were exceptions as regional centers) against strip high-rise along their beach fronts has prevailed, making those beaches easily accessible for both local residents and general public users.

The Metropolitan Los Angeles public and local Venice residents also have the need for protection of their Venice Beach from a wall of highrise and accompanying congestion.



B. EXISTING NORTH BEACH 1 AND USE AND CIRCULATION CHARACTERISTICS.

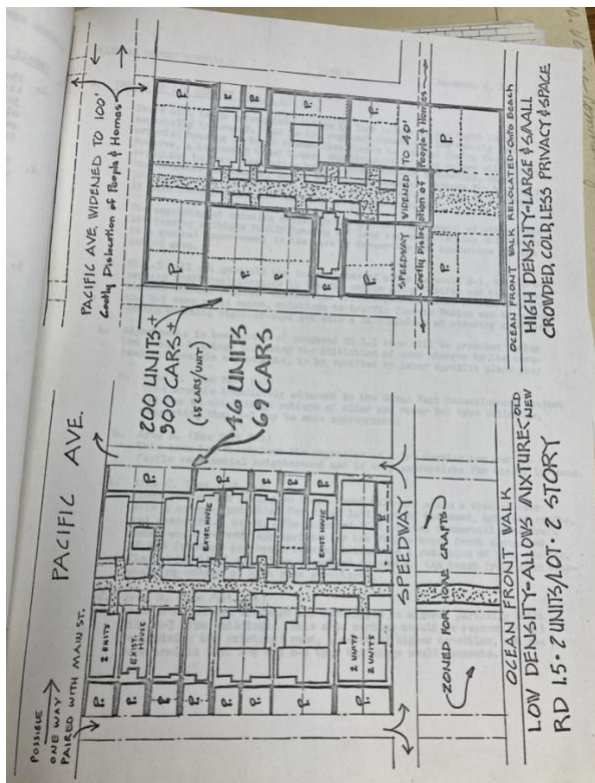
The Area of the Venice North Beach included in city plan case No. 23569 is not a homogeneous composition but is instead made up of several areas with differing landuse, circulation and other influencing factors. (Excluding commercial zone along Windward) see accompanying map

1. Area A. Santa Monica City Line to Ross Av. from Main to Ocean Front Walk.
 This area is immediately adjacent to the Ocean Park project in Santa Monica, is semi-vacant, and directly accessible to Lincoln Bl. Via Rose Av. Many of the structures are olden apartments and newer apartments built to R-3 Venities. Absentee ownership is very high with several longer holdings.
2. Area B. Ross Ave. to Windward Av. between Main and Speedway.
 This area is composed mostly of single family houses on 30 ft. wide lots, some 2 story 2 unit buildings, and some old brick apartment and hotel buildings. Most of the streets are used as pedestrian character. Auto access is from Main and Pacific into narrow alleys and Speedway, a 20' to 25' alley. Traffic is mostly local resident generated except in the summer when beach users cause serious congestion approx 1/3 of the lots are resident owners are mostly single lot owners.
3. Area C. Navy to Windward, between speedway and Ocean Front Walk.
 This area, facing onto to Ocean Front Walk is accessible only from 20 wide speedway which in turn is accessible from the 20' alleys and several narrow streets. The lots average 20' deep. Old brick apartment and hold buildings 2 to 3 stories high, commercial buildings, and vacant lots are spread throughout the area.
4. Area D. Windward to Washington between Pacific and Ocean Front Walk.
 This area is similar in lot layout, circulation problems, and original development to area b, except that numerous 2 and 3 story apartments and more expensive beach homes and apartments similar to the Esplanade area of that city. The difference however is that the Redondo Beach street facilities are wide and in balance with the land use.



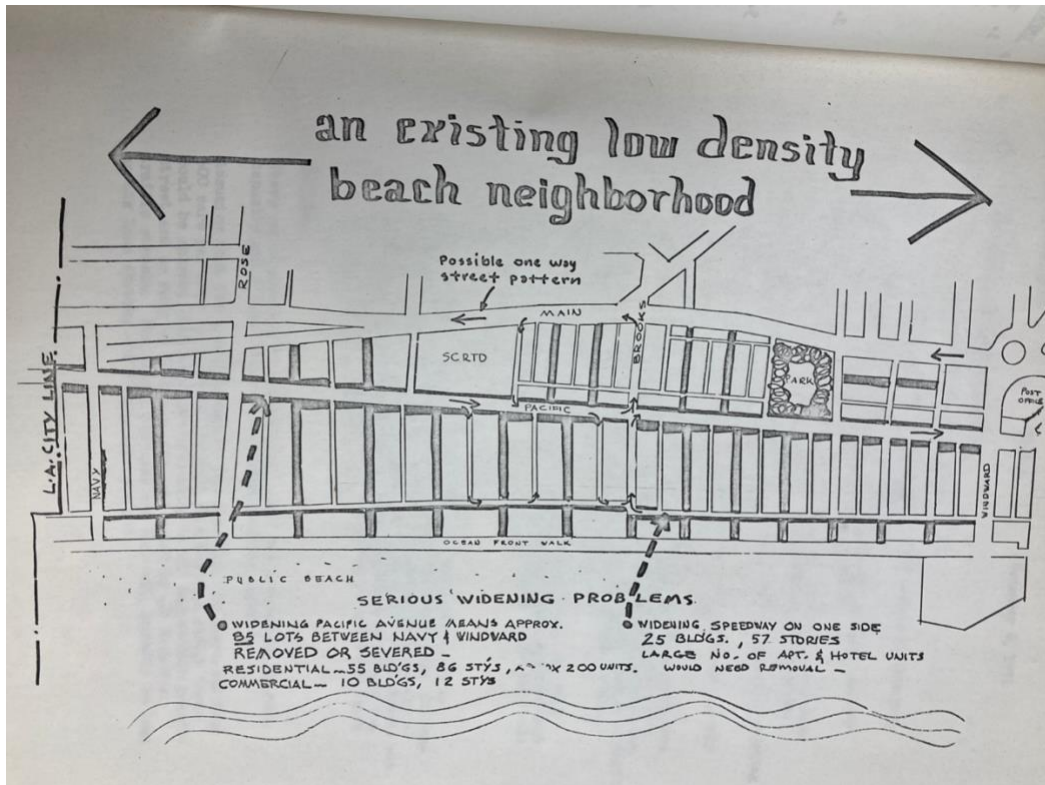
C. IMPACT OF HIGH DENSITY ZONING.

1. The Venice North Beach is a classic example of overzoning, a zoning practice of the thirties and forties for most Southern California cities. The justification years ago for such residential zoning was the belief that an older area could be rejuvenated by higher density zoning. As a result the amount of R-3, R-4, R-5 zoning that has accumulated would, if put to use, increase the L.A. population to as much as ten million.
2. The multi-family high density overzoning along the Venice North Beach has resulted in speculative buying and selling, absentee ownership, and the long term blighting process of unkept properties, transient tenants and encroachment of large buildings next to single family houses. Examples of blight can be found throughout Los Angeles in low density residential areas that have been so overzoned. The L.A. General Plan documents consistently point to this problem.
3. The North Beach, area B., was never physically capable of receiving R-5 density, yet the fantasies continued deluding many to invest in some future high rise boom. That time never came, but for many others the call of wind and wave of the Venice Beach prompted them to buy and became resident owners. Today the property ownership pattern is a mixture of many different absentee owners and resident owners preventing consolidation. Since banks do not favor loaning for single family rehabilitation in multi-family zones the blighting process continues.
4. The problems that will be created by high rise high density apartments along North Beach include:
 - a. Visual barriers created by a high rise wall effect.
 - b. Public access to the beach decreased due to large buildings, encroaching on walkways, and the traffic congestion.
 - c. Additional traffic volume and congestion that will be forced onto adjacent Venice streets and neighborhoods.
 - d. Dislocation of existing low and moderate income resident families by higher income people thus destroying this unique mixed ethnic and cultural community.



D. IMPACT OF LOW DENSITY RD 1.5 ZONING.

1. There will be no perceptible change in land values in the North Beach, especially in area B., due to the regional demand for low density family-oriented housing in beach communities (refer to Coastal Zoning Study). However, a beginning trend toward stabilization of true values will occur, resulting in less speculative buying, more resident ownership, physical improvements and tender, loving care of the houses. Methods for housing of low income elderly and others can more easily be found under RD 1.5 than if high density high cost buildings are built under R-5.
2. The upgrading of existing dwellings and gradual replacement of others with low density multiple family housing and less transient tenancy will result in a general improvement in the care of properties and appearance for the entire area.
3. RD 1.5 will not generate the large number of autos as would R-5, thus preventing additional increase in traffic volume along Pacific and the access streets through Venice. Without the traffic pressure that continued use of the R-5 zone would cause, solutions to traffic flow in Venice can be solved within existing right-of-ways and with a bare minimum of widening anywhere.
4. Adjustments in boundaries of proposed RD 1.5 zone will be proposed during the public hearings following the initiation of some changes by the commission; Possible adjustments, to be verified by later specific plans are:
 - a. Area A. (See Part B-1)
This area is immediately adjacent to the Ocean Park Redevelopment Project and has an established pattern of older and newer R-3 type buildings, suggesting that R-3 may be more appropriate.
 - b. Area B. (See Part B-2)
This area has maintained its character as a low density one and two family residential neighborhood and is very appropriate for the RD 1.5 zone.
 - c. Area C. (See Part B-3)
These properties facing on Ocean Front Walk are again a special case with a unique, potential for mixed land uses of business, arts and crafts, and residential users. The proposed "O-C limited Commercial Home Craft zone" would be very appropriate for the Venice beach front along most of its frontage and would also contribute to a reduction of auto traffic. The height limit of 45' is essential to protect the beach front from overwhelming masses of high rise structures.
 - d. Area D. (See Part B-4)
This area between Windward and Washington is already partially built with R-3 type buildings. This area perhaps should be rezoned to R-3 recognizing the existing trend, preventing higher densities, and the auto traffic that R-4 and R-5 type buildings would generate.



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5. TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION.

1. Basic Facts of Venice Traffic Circulation.
 - a. The deletion of the Pacific Freeway means that surface streets must carry the projected 1985 traffic volume.
 - b. Future landuse must be in balance with the traffic carrying capacity of local streets to carry through and local traffic.
 - c. Existing streets are already reaching capacity and cannot carry much more traffic without some widening and/or improved traffic design.
 - d. Most existing streets cannot be widened without drastic removal of existing buildings and dislocation of residents.
 - e. Most of Venice local streets are narrow and discontinuous and are only adequate to carry local residential generated traffic.
2. Impact of high density development on traffic flow in the North Beach Area between Windward and Navy. The traffic generated by development of high density and high rise commercial and apartment buildings along North Beach under the existing zoning (C-2, R-5, R-4, R-3 etc.) will add a volume of traffic to the street system far beyond the practical capacity of the streets, short of massive and costly buildings and people removed.

The letter from S.S. Taylor, City Traffic Engineer, of Sept. 16, 1970 clearly states the traffic-landuse imbalance for the Venice area and that both additional traffic facilities and reduction of landuse intensity will probably be needed. (See attached copy of letter)
3. Analysis of traffic impact on Venice Streets.
 - a. Although looking up to date traffic counts and projections it is possible to determine relative scale of impact by residential and commercial development on the street system. Following is a summary of our study in which the traffic capacity of lanes in existing streets was compared with the increased number of autos generated by either the high density or low density approach to land use in the North Beach area of Venice. (See insert or table)
 - b. **SUMMARY**

There could possibly be 4 more lanes added for North-South traffic capacity and 6 lanes added to East-West traffic capacity.

Assuming that the average capacity per lane could be increased from 600 cars per hour to 700 cars per hour with improved design there could be approx. 4400 cars per hour added to all North-South traffic street and as many as 5200 cars per hour added to all East-West traffic streets. The actual increase per hour will probably be less on six lane streets due to six lane changes.

EXISTING VERSES POSSIBLE PRACTICAL (1) NUMBER OF LANES ON THROUGH STREETS CAPABLE OF THROUGH TRAFFIC (2).

1.	NORTH-SOUTH STREETS	EXIST. LANES	PRACTICAL (1) FUTURE LANES
	Lincoln Blvd.	4	4
	Washington Blvd. Main to Venice	2	2
	Washington Blvd. Venice to Washington St.	2	4
	Main Street	4	6
	Pacific Ave.	4	4
	TOTAL LANES	16	20

2.	EAST-WEST STREETS		
	ROSE Ave.	2	4
	Venice Blvd.	4	6
	Washington Blvd.	4	6
	TOTAL LANES	10	16

(1) Practical means no parking removal and improving traffic flow by adding left turn lanes and limiting number of alley and local street intersections, improved signalization, and pedestrian overcrossing.

(2) Through traffic means those streets that do not penetrate local residential neighborhoods and not including residential feeder streets.

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4. Traffic generated by high density or low density plans for the North Beach is only a portion of the total daily and peak hour load to be carried by the street system. No consideration has been given here for traffic increases caused by the Marina developments, Venice public beach users (estimated as needing minimum of 18,100 parking spaces) other Venice commercial and residential developments, the Peninsula residential, the Santa Monica Ocean Park development, and other through traffic. The many thousands of additional cars that will be added are obviously more than the added traffic lanes can handle unless densities are reduced throughout Venice.

5. It is estimated that a minimum of 20,000 cars would be parked/day in the North Beach (between Windward and Navy) area due to high density residential development and accompanying uses. (2 cars/unit)

But with the low density (rollback) development only approximately 6400 cars (2 cars/unit) would be parked, only approximately 1600 more than existing.

The difference of 13,600 cars not having to use the street system will be an important contribution to being able to solve the traffic problem. Actually the low density approach would even cause less traffic due to the elderly, lower income and family composition of resident owners as compared with the mostly adult, upper income composition of high density development where car ownership would be higher.

6. CONCLUSION: If only 20% of the additional high density resident cars were to be used at the same rush hour, 2720 cars, or approximately 4 traffic lanes would be needed per peak hour, thereby using most of the additional number of lanes that can be created by the improvements suggested in part a. above.

The low density approach however would increase only 1600 to 200 cars over that in the existing North Beach area now. (Assuming 2000 lots at average of 2 cars/lot.)

This scale of increase is small in relation to the many other traffic generators in the surrounding area described in part 4 above.