

*New York and
Los Angeles*
The Uncertain Future

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CHAPTER 14

Planning Los Angeles

*The Changing Politics of Neighborhood
and Downtown Development*

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For most of the twentieth century, the central plotlines of growth and development policy in Los Angeles were shaped by two sets of actors—the city's business leaders and its entrepreneurial public sector bureaucrats. The region's business elites—in particular, powerful land developers, business organizations, and the owners of the *Los Angeles Times*—provided the impetus for expansionary development. However, it was the local public sector, with access to key governmental powers and plentiful public capital and bonding capacity, that produced and directed the transformation of Los Angeles into the second most populous city in the country and one of the world's leading trade hubs. By offering outlying areas access to subsidized water, for example, the city's Department of Water and Power catalyzed continued geographic expansion of the city's territorial boundaries through annexation (Erie 2006). Equally powerful proprietary departments overseeing Los Angeles's ports and airports built one of the world's greatest trade-transportation complexes (Erie 2004). Together, the partnership between the business sector and the city's bureaucratic machines served as the basis for a strong pro-growth regime that has dominated city politics during most of the modern era.

Beginning in the 1960s, the growth coalition turned its gaze inward, focusing on efforts to revitalize Los Angeles's urban core that had been devastated by the social and economic forces that continued to push white middle-class families to the suburbs. To oversee the revival of downtown, the city called on another potent and largely autonomous bureaucracy, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), which took the lead in coordinating and financing urban renewal efforts downtown. Despite the CRA's record of accomplishments—including agency efforts to revitalize

the Bunker Hill area that resulted in a fortyfold increase in property values over the course of four decades, and its successful investment in the broader downtown commercial district (Marks 2004)—the political consensus in favor of urban growth began to fray by the mid-1980s.

Increasingly, middle-class homeowners came to resent the indifference of public officials toward growing congestion, environmental degradation, and general quality-of-life concerns that accompanied the continued intensification of land-use, particularly dense residential and commercial development (Fulton 2001; Purcell 1997, 2000). By teaming up with environmentalists and suburban business owners, well-organized homeowners' associations formed the basis for a new slow-growth political coalition that eventually succeeded in displacing the growth machine as the dominant force in city politics (Davis 1990; Fulton 2001; Sonenshein 1994). In one of its first acts, the slow-growth coalition and supportive elected officials took steps to neuter the CRA, which had come to embody the increasingly unpopular forces of development. Using the threat of San Fernando Valley secession, growth opponents pushed for greater public oversight and input in development decisions, leading to the creation of new local participatory bodies as part of the late-1990s city charter reforms.

In this chapter, we survey the political, institutional, and economic evolution that has accompanied the dramatic changes in Los Angeles's planning and development policy over the past two decades, both in the neighborhood periphery and the downtown core. The creation of neighborhood councils in 2000 as part of a new voter-approved city charter provided an institutional mechanism for local groups to participate in shaping their communities. Although neighborhood councils received few formal powers and were designed primarily to serve in an advisory capacity, the councils came to serve as effective institutional focal points and "fire alarms" for mobilizing constituencies that opposed continued development in their neighborhoods. While homeowners' associations saw neighborhood councils as vehicles to limit development and preserve quality of life, liberal activists saw them as a means for democratic participation involving the interests of all residents, not just homeowners, in local land-use decisions. These competing interests crystallized in vigorous and emotional battles to win control over the new councils. Nowhere was this conflict between competing visions of local participation more evident than in the racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse beach community of Venice, which has a strong progressive tradition. We examine the Venice Neighborhood Council's experience in the historical context of shifting battles between local groups with different visions of community, development, and public space.

Perhaps most surprisingly, the dramatic weakening of the CRA has done little to slow downtown's economic revival. Filling the void, private developers have spearheaded the \$12.2 billion building boom known as the Downtown Renaissance that has, by one estimate, produced 174,000 new jobs and tens of millions of dollars in new tax revenues (Downtown Center Business Improvement District 2006). Indeed, since the late 1990s, the three-mile downtown core—bounded by the Santa Ana Freeway (Route 101) on the north and east, the Harbor Freeway (Route 110) on the west, and the Santa Monica Freeway (Interstate 10) on the south—has been flooded

by new development anchored by more than thirty largely privately-financed civic and cultural projects, including the iconic Staples Center, Los Angeles Cathedral, and Disney Concert Hall.

Despite continued downtown revitalization, the political dynamics of Los Angeles's redevelopment have been fundamentally altered. The city's once-powerful public bureaucracy has clearly become a junior partner in the growth coalition, ceding leadership and initiative to the private sector. For example, in 2010, when the Anschutz Entertainment Group, a large sporting and music entertainment conglomerate, announced plans to build another major sports complex consisting of a new retractable-roof football stadium on 15 acres of city-owned land next to the LA Live entertainment complex and the Staples Center, it was the company rather than the city that began to solicit design proposals and pick the architect for the project (Hawthorne 2010). The emerging dominance of private developers in setting the agenda for downtown redevelopment has been one of the great ironies produced by Los Angeles's recent era of political and institutional reforms. Designed to increase the responsiveness of previously insulated bureaucrats and to encourage participation among residents, efforts to increase political oversight of the CRA and decentralize responsibility over land-use and planning functions have worked to limit the discretion of democratically accountable municipal leaders over major decisions shaping downtown.

We examine the Downtown Renaissance and megaprojects in the context of the changing politics and institutions of Los Angeles's planning and development. We also consider the use of police power in the arsenal of pro-growth public policies. As part of downtown revitalization, there has been a major effort to clean up Skid Row, widely known as the "Homeless Capital of America" (Zavis 2010). Here, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), rather than the CRA, has been the major public actor involved in a containment strategy for the city's large homeless population.

THE CHANGING POLITICS OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1900, the City of Los Angeles was home to just over 102,000 residents, making it the 36th largest city in the country. Yet by 1960, it had grown more than twenty-four-fold to just under 2.5 million residents, a number behind only New York and Chicago. The population explosion was accompanied by continued geographic expansion. As developers constructed more and more houses to accommodate the growing numbers of Angelenos, the city's physical boundaries continued to stretch outward. Between 1910 and 1920, the municipality's total land area grew from 99 square miles to nearly 366 square miles, making it the geographically largest city in the United States. By 1960, Los Angeles's land area exceeded 450 square miles.

As in many other cities, the rise of the suburbs—aided by federal subsidies for highway construction and mortgage interest deductions and accelerated by the 1965 Watts Riot—had a devastating effect on downtown (Frieden and Sagalyn 1991).

With people, businesses, and investments fleeing the city's commercial core, downtown became increasingly shabby. Mounting urban decay attracted attention from the city's business and political leaders, who established the CRA in 1948 for the purpose of reversing the decline of Bunker Hill, a previously upscale neighborhood in the heart of Los Angeles's downtown business district that by the 1940s had become one of the most dangerous and rundown areas in the city.

Under California's redevelopment law, the agency received unusually expansive public powers, making it an ideal public-sector partner to oversee a revitalization of downtown (Marks 2004). First, the law gave the agency the power to acquire property forcefully, if necessary, through eminent domain. Once acquired, the property could be developed by the CRA or sold to private developers through private negotiations, with the agency exempted from the city's competitive-bidding requirements. Finally, the CRA was also vested with authority to regulate land use and development within geographically defined project areas and to allow developers to exceed existing density limits, usurping discretion previously exercised by the City Council.

Most importantly, in the mid-1970s, amendments to state law gave the CRA the power to collect property taxes, freeing the agency from the rough and tumble of the annual budget process. Under the new tax-increment financing system, property tax receipts within a redevelopment area were frozen at their current levels at the time of the creation of the project area. Over time, as public investments brought about urban renewal, growing property values would lead to increased property taxes. Most of these new tax proceeds above the amount collected when the area was created would be diverted to the CRA. Securitizing these expected future earnings, the agency could sell bonds to provide the initial capital needed to invest in decrepit areas. Armed with broad land-use powers and a dedicated revenue stream, and governed by an appointed board of commissioners, the CRA was, by design, insulated from direct control by elected officials and thus freed from burdensome political meddling (Marks 2004).

The 1973 mayoral election brought a strong supporter of downtown redevelopment to the city's most visible public office. Although business leaders were initially wary of the new black mayor, Tom Bradley, the former city councilman who unseated incumbent Sam Yorty and was elected with strong support from blacks and liberal Jewish voters, they quickly embraced him as one of their own (Sonenshein 1994). Over the course of the next decade, Bradley, the CRA, and business elites would form the three pillars of a strong pro-growth regime. In 1975, Bradley began to implement one of the nation's most ambitious downtown redevelopment programs. To supplement agency efforts in Bunker Hill, Bradley pushed through the creation of a second project area in the broader Central Business District. The efforts proved extremely successful, with office space downtown growing more than 50 percent between 1972 and 1982 (Saltzstein and Sonenshein 1991). Overall, redevelopment in Bunker Hill and the Central Business District would produce nearly 35 million square feet of retail, office, and industrial space (Marks 2004).

By the mid-1980s, however, Los Angeles's growth machine was facing the first phase of popular revolt brought about by changing economic and social conditions. Growing immigration and globalization, combined with deindustrialization, flooded

the city with an increasing number of low-skilled, poor, and minority group residents. Like white, middle-class Angelenos, these new denizens too dreamed about leaving the central city for the tranquil suburbs. Unfortunately, many of them could not afford the detached single-family houses the region has become famous for. To satisfy this emerging segment of the housing market, land developers began to build apartment complexes in previously upscale neighborhoods. Increasing intensification of land-use was aided by Los Angeles's loose regulations, largely unchanged from the 1940s, that imposed few limits on the density of new construction and allowed developers to obtain building permits without public notice or hearings (Fulton 2001).

These new developments brought increased traffic, pollution, and an influx of lower-income Latinos into previously white neighborhoods, sowing the seeds of mass discontent (Davis 1990; Fulton 2001). Politically active and mobilized through their membership in homeowners' associations, homeowners pushed for limits on continued development, demanded greater say in local land-use decisions, and opposed further construction of multifamily housing near their homes. Social justice activists also spoke out against the CRA and the forceful relocation of downtown's poor and homeless to clear the way for redevelopment. However, with most city departments covered by civil service provisions that protected workers from politically motivated retribution and the CRA further insulated from political pressure by an independent board, city government remained largely unresponsive to the growing backlash.

In 1986, opponents of continued development scored a major victory with the overwhelming passage of Proposition U, a local voter initiative that placed strict caps on further commercial development. The initiative, described by the *Los Angeles Times* as "the most extensive one-shot effort to limit future development in the city's history" (Connell 1986), cut the size of new buildings permitted on most commercially and industrially zoned land by more than half. Developers seeking to exceed the new limits would need to obtain special dispensation from the city as part of a public process that would allow greater community input. Homeowners' association leadership was instrumental to the measure's success (Hogen-Esch 2001). Proposition U had been authored by City Councilmen Marvin Braude and Zev Yaroslavsky. Sensing the changing political tides, Yaroslavsky, a former Bradley ally, had become a born-again slow-growth advocate and the mayor's chief political adversary. Shortly after the election, Braude and Yaroslavsky unveiled a ten-point plan proposing even tighter limits on development and increased public participation and review of new projects (Braude and Yaroslavsky 1987).

To rein in the CRA, opponents of the mayor and his growth-minded allies had to find a way to pierce the agency's political shield. In 1988, critics succeeded in pushing out the CRA's longtime executive director, Edward Helfeld. Two years later, his successor, John Tuite, was also fired. As slow-growth activists scored additional electoral upsets, their influence on the City Council continued to grow. In the wake of redevelopment abuses in other cities, publicized by the statewide media, Yaroslavsky pushed ahead with a measure to dissolve the CRA board of commissioners and give the City Council direct control over redevelopment functions. The proposal failed by just one vote. In February 1991, the council adopted a far-reaching reform plan, broadening

city council oversight over CRA policy, administration, and functions. Although the new ordinance affected almost every level of agency operations, its most important provisions gave the City Council power to review major agency decisions, giving elected officials final say over staff compensation and the awarding of all loans and grants over \$250,000 (Marks 2004). Facing growing unpopularity, Bradley chose not to run for reelection in 1993, depriving the CRA of its leading public advocate. Once a powerful and autonomous city agency, the CRA had been reduced to "asking for City Council permission each time it needs to sharpen a pencil," according to one recent CRA official (quoted in Marks 2004). In early 2012, the City Council moved to effectively dismantle the CRA after the state legislature voted to dissolve local redevelopment agencies and redirect some of their tax increment dollars to close harrowing deficits in the state budget.

ERA OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: VALLEY SECESSION AND CHARTER REFORM

Not all redevelopment agency critics were opponents of continued growth and development. In the San Fernando Valley, homeowners and environmental activists were joined by business owners who had come to resent the downtown business establishment's seemingly firm grip over city government. Organized into smaller regional chambers of commerce, Valley business owners often broke ranks with the downtown-dominated Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce on key issues. These business groups opposed the continued focus on downtown, believed that their tax dollars were subsidizing downtown redevelopment, and demanded increased economic investment in outlying areas of the city, including policies that would help the suburbs attract high-end retail stores (Hogen-Esch 2001).

Indeed, San Fernando Valley interests had opposed the city's downtown redevelopment efforts for decades. As chair of the City Council Planning Committee, Valley Councilman Ernani Bernardi blocked the approval of a 1972 plan calling for the creation of a redevelopment area in the city's Central Business District. In particular, Bernardi opposed the plan's reliance on tax-increment financing, which he argued would drain funds from other parts of the city and provide downtown projects an unfair advantage over development elsewhere in the city (Marks 2004). After Bradley's mayoral victory, Bernardi was replaced by Councilwoman Pat Russell, a liberal Bradley ally, as the head of the planning committee. When the Central Business District project was approved by the City Council over his objections in 1975, Bernardi filed a lawsuit in court charging that the plan had violated state environmental laws by failing to disclose its costs to taxpayers living in other parts of Los Angeles. The city eventually settled the lawsuit by agreeing to cap the amount of tax increment that could be spent downtown.

Two decades later, the new political coalition of Valley home and business owners had broader objectives than just limiting the influence and independence of the CRA. Instead, convinced that Valley residents were paying a disproportionate amount of

taxes without receiving their fair share of city services, Valley interests formed the group Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment (Valley VOTE) and issued a declaration of independence, laying the groundwork for secession. In 1997, Valley VOTE succeeded in securing state legislation eliminating a city council veto over any secession measure (Sonenshein and Hogen-Esch 2006).

Within a year, San Fernando Valley residents submitted more than 200,000 signatures on a petition to require an initial study on the consequences of breaking away from the rest of the city. With their backs against the wall, elected city officials announced proposals to reform the Los Angeles City Charter to address Valley concerns and diffuse the growing secession movement. While the City Council made appointments to a charter reform commission, Mayor Richard Riordan pushed a competing plan with an elected commission, although the two commissions would eventually work together on a consensus document that secured voter approval in 1999 (Sonenshein 2004).

While the city charter changes did not substantively shift the balance of power between the city's elected branches, the new document laid out a drastically different approach to growth. To encourage broader community participation, the charter created a Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to oversee a new citywide system of neighborhood councils. The charter specified that the councils were to include representation of the "many diverse interests in communities" and to play an advisory role on issues of neighborhood concern. Although the councils were not given any specific public powers, the charter envisioned that they would serve as an "early warning system," creating opportunities for resident input prior to controversial decisions being made by the City Council and other city boards and commissions. This offered a formal coordination device for anti-growth interests.¹

Without requiring that neighborhood council officers be chosen through elections, the charter specified that their membership had to be open to all "stakeholders"—those living, working, or owning property in the relevant neighborhoods. Aside from noting that the councils would be self-organized by these stakeholders, the document did not spell out how the new system would function, giving the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment the power to promulgate necessary regulations and oversee neighborhood council formation.

To encourage greater responsiveness to local interests in land-use decisions, the new charter also created a system of seven area planning commissions to supplement the previous citywide body, whose jurisdiction was now to be limited to projects with broader geographic impact.² Each area planning commission was to be composed of five members, all required to reside within the body's area of jurisdiction, and was given important authority over local land-use policy, including jurisdiction over local planning decisions and zoning appeals, power to grant limited exemptions from zoning rules, and ability to make land-use recommendations to the City Council. Together, the neighborhood councils and area planning commissions created additional venues for public participation in the city's planning process and gave neighborhoods new opportunities to veto undesirable projects—two key demands put forward by slow-growth advocates since the 1980s.

CONTESTATION OVER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SPACE: VENICE'S NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

By 2008, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment had certified more than ninety neighborhood councils, each covering an area with an average of roughly 40,000 residents (Department of Neighborhood Empowerment 2008).³ Homeowners have played a dominant role in organizing the creation of these councils, and in some circumstances, have come to control their boards, using the councils as a focal point for mobilizing like-minded groups and forming coalitions with others in different parts of the city (Musso et al. 2006). Recent studies have found that communities with more long-term residents and higher levels of ethnic homogeneity are more successful in forming neighborhood councils (Jun 2007), and that neighborhood council board members are significantly more likely to cite transportation and land-use as major city problems than regular LA residents (Musso, Weare, and Jun 2009). An analysis of council agendas has found that land-use issues represent one of the primary loci of attention during neighborhood council deliberations (Musso et al. 2007).

Yet in communities with competing groups and higher levels of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity, it has proven more difficult to unite community interests around a common purpose. In such settings, participants often label the neighborhood council system as a broken political structure that brings competing groups together in a cycle of neighborhood discord (Greene 2004). For these areas, changes to the city charter laid the groundwork for new political struggles to control local participatory bodies.

In Venice, for example, the formation of the Venice Neighborhood Council reignited a long-standing conflict between progressive activists and middle- and upper-class homeowner interests. A coastal community within the LA city boundaries, Venice is located between the independent municipality of Santa Monica and the unincorporated, county-controlled area of Marina del Rey. African American residents, left-wing political activists, homeless men and women, artists selling paintings on its famed boardwalk, and newer and wealthier homeowners, retailers, and developers have all taken part in a battle over the control of the neighborhood council.

By 1950, after decades of disinvestment, Venice's housing and commercial infrastructure was in decline. Commonly labeled as an urban slum, it was a central focus of new urban renewal and code enforcement programs along the coast. The CRA, Haynes Foundation, and Los Angeles City Planning Department all conducted studies about renewal potential and reached similar conclusions about "sub-standard" housing, "narrow lots," "poor street layout," and "under-use in relation to its potentiality for beach rental property" (Cunningham 1976, 182-83).

Just south of Venice, Marina del Rey was constructed in the 1960s out of barren marshes as an affluent residential/leisure enclave for young professionals with the largest manmade leisure boat harbor in the world (Sherman and Pipkin 2005). Interest grew in revitalizing the most rundown section of Venice, the remaining six canals located on the border of Venice and Marina del Rey. Los Angeles city officials, developers, and property speculators wanted to redesign and connect the stagnant

waterways to the marina, ultimately pushing out the bohemian culture that had settled there and transforming the area into a middle-class residential neighborhood. In addition, new building code enforcement programs targeted beatnik cafes and the declining housing infrastructure lining the beach (Maynard 1991).

Yet, a major progressive movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s to promote socioeconomic diversity and effectively stall rapid economic transition. Initially created by Councilwoman Russell in 1973, the Venice Town Council provided residents with a voice in the process of coastal development.⁴ Left-wing activists, including members of the Peace and Freedom Party, which was formed in Venice during the previous decade, took control of the organization, championing an anti-development/affordable housing platform. In the same decade, the state created the California Coastal Commission; its mission was to protect coastal access to land up to one mile inland from the coastline. Local progressive activists fought successfully for over a decade to halt large-scale development projects and make economic diversity, affordable housing, and small-scale development central priorities. They blocked efforts to construct luxury high-rise buildings on the northern end of the beach that many worried would resemble a Miami waterfront (Stanton 2005).

Both progressives and middle-class homeowners feared a tidal wave of development in the 1970s and 1980s, and they influenced the framing of the Los Angeles Planning Department's Venice Specific Plan. The plan adopted further limits on development, including tighter restrictions on height, density, setbacks, transportation, parking, and other land-use issues in Venice. Although it did not completely stop development, the plan changed its pace and overall design.

At the same time that luxury developments were stalled, affordable housing advocates secured major victories and social service organizations expanded, demonstrating the complexity of Los Angeles's coastal growth machine. Many of the progressive activists and state environmentalists supported projects that could maintain socioeconomic diversity. During the 1970s, an African American community organization called Project Action received economic backing to construct and manage fourteen housing projects in a one-square-mile area in the center of Venice. Another nonprofit community housing developer, the Venice Community Housing Corporation, constructed additional affordable housing units over the next decade.

Although downtown Los Angeles was the center of services for a quickly growing homeless population, Venice emerged as another homeless mecca. Existing social service agencies expanded their programs to assist the new street population. Moreover, the Venice Boardwalk, a vibrant public spectacle with carnival performers, artists, and vendors, provided many homeless individuals with new economic opportunities and turned the beachfront into another enclave for the destitute, further complicating waterfront development.

While progressive activists and middle-class homeowners were strange bedfellows in efforts to stall plans for beachfront development, growing demand for coastal property led to gradual changes in Venice's demographic composition over the next four decades. Development interests largely failed in their ongoing efforts to amend the Venice Specific Plan (Hathaway 2007), but developers slowly transformed the community through condominium conversions and larger single-family dwellings

for wealthier residents. The growing proximity between classes and cultures led to a new focus on quality-of-life politics and a debate about the acceptable uses of public spaces, challenging the progressive tradition that had prevailed during previous decades.

The Venice Neighborhood Council was created in this context of changing political tides. Extensive interviews and field observations showed that its formation was marked by a strident debate between "quality-of-life" and "progressive" interest groups.⁵ Like many neighborhood councils throughout Los Angeles, early coordinators of the Venice Neighborhood Council were members of a local homeowner association. They were opposed to the clustering of social services in their Rose Avenue neighborhood, where agencies had refocused much of their efforts on the growing homeless population in the 1980s and 1990s. The Rose Avenue activists slowly branched out and mobilized other homeowners from different areas of Venice around a common quality-of-life platform. To build a broader coalition, the group made an early decision to create an inclusive community-wide dialogue that was mindful of Venice's diversity.

In 2002, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the new city body responsible for overseeing the neighborhood council system, formally certified the Venice Neighborhood Council. With the first election, the council devolved from its initial goal of open dialogue into intense interest group competition between the 1960s-era progressives and those interested in pursuing a quality-of-life agenda. The progressives called upon narratives about "community control of community affairs," seeking to include African American and homeless activists in their opposition to gentrification. The quality-of-life activists were comparatively more conservative residents. While most of them espoused a liberal political ideology and were Democratic Party supporters, they had become weary of increasing threats to their quality of life, including homeless residents leaving feces, urine, and garbage on streets, people dealing and using drugs in public spaces, graffiti on private property, and ongoing gang violence.

The quality-of-life faction won a clear majority on the initial council board. As the early coordinators of the certification process, their email and phone lists ultimately turned into a widespread neighborhood newsletter with thousands of subscribers and quickly facilitated voter mobilization. After serving as a minority faction on the board, progressives expanded their platform. They canvassed the neighborhood for new voters, held open forums, distributed leaflets, developed their own email lists, and published articles criticizing the board majority in the *Free Venice Beachhead*, a radical free paper dating back to the late 1960s. In the 2003 election, the Venice Progressives won every open seat.

Disturbed by the outcome, quality-of-life activists challenged the validity of the election. The president resigned from her position while she still had another year of eligibility. The board had allowed unchecked use of absentee ballots, and quality-of-life activists accused the progressives of fraud by encouraging participation from people not proven to be Venice residents. They argued that many of the voters were homeless with no formal ties to Venice. The new city charter and related implementation ordinances provided few guidelines about who was eligible to participate in

the neighborhood council elections (Newton 2010) and similar confrontations took place in many Los Angeles communities. In the Venice case, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment intervened and ruled that the Progressives had fairly won the election.

As a central venue for neighborhood politics, council meetings remained combative. Quality-of-life activists accused the progressive board members of being "Marxists" who facilitated criminal activity by making Venice hospitable to the homeless, or "low-lives and dangerous thugs," as one member described the homeless. Progressive board members labeled their opponents as "rich developers" and "racists," although there was little evidence that quality-of-life issues were about race or development. Widespread attention was brought to an increasingly fractious Venice when the *Los Angeles Times* reported in a front-page story, "As housing prices soar amid homelessness, factions feud about the community's character" (Garrison 2004).

In following years, election results were challenged, accusations of spending fraud surfaced, disputes over the definition of "stakeholder" were commonplace, and significant political issues about the right to influence neighborhood space often turned into interpersonal rivalries. With the local council embroiled in so much conflict and controversy, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment has intervened several times and threatened decertification, which would have taken away city funding. After one fierce battle over election legitimacy in 2004, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment rejected the council election results, accused continuing board members of going "rogue" by operating without an official quorum, and forced the community to create a new council and bylaws from scratch. The stigma of past conflicts—arguments, accusations, and process-related blunders—confronts current board members still opposed by rival groups.

Prolonged neighborhood council political tension is not unique to Venice. In Lincoln Heights, east of downtown, a conflict over whether the neighborhood council should support an AIDS memorial turned into an enduring controversy over the use of money and accusations of fraud. In Westchester, a West LA community where the Los Angeles International Airport is located, residents accused a major developer of paying for pizza parties in return for voters supporting a sympathetic faction vying for seats on the council. Existing neighborhood council board members were so concerned about losing their seats that they then illegally required voters to show income tax statements or property tax bills at the election site in order to hamper voters' ability to cast their ballots. In South Central Los Angeles, where an influential and successful community empowerment district operated for years, the creation of a neighborhood council transformed local politics into frequent and hostile battles over procedure and process (Greene 2004).

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment has either decertified or threatened to decertify a wide range of neighborhood councils due to similar controversies. In many parts of the city, neighborhood councils have confronted difficult and divisive questions over who has the right to speak for the community, thus stalling any semblance of local unity or the emergence of consensus around shared community interests. In more homogeneous community settings, however, residents have succeeded in using neighborhood councils and area planning commissions to their

advantage by blocking major developments. This has encouraged developers to seek out new opportunities in places with less community participation and greater development potential. As a result, downtown Los Angeles has become a major growth node.

A PRIVATE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN, 1990–2010

The neighborhood councils and area planning commissions opened policy decisions over local land-use to greater public scrutiny and provided venues to mobilize and institutionalize opposition to major growth. As a result, they both significantly increased the transaction costs for pursuing development in suburban parts of Los Angeles, areas where homeowner groups are most likely to be active. Increasingly, downtown has come to be seen as an attractive and politically viable site for continued development. With a large minority population and an area filled almost exclusively by multifamily residences—according to the 2000 Census, fewer than 3 percent of the roughly 13,000 housing units downtown were single-family homes—it is an area that is unlikely to produce a strong political movement opposed to major projects.⁶ Although a Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council was officially created in 2002, the bylaws set aside nearly half of the seats on its board of directors for business interests, cultural organizations, and local employees, leaving just eleven of twenty-eight directorships for residents and homeowners.⁷

In 1999, the City Council adopted new rules lowering the requirements for the adaptive reuse of underutilized commercial and industrial properties downtown, encouraging further growth. Between 2000 and 2009, the population of downtown grew nearly 40 percent, to 35,000 residents. Table 14.1 tracks the issuance of building permits for new construction in Los Angeles over the course of the past decade. As the table makes clear, growing hostility to construction in other parts of the city and the adoption of policies that encourage development downtown have made the area one of the leading centers of growth. With less than 1 percent of the city's total land area and population, the downtown community planning area has been the site of more than 10 percent of all new office space built since 2000 in the city and, strikingly, more than 20 percent of new retail floor space. The broader region that falls under the jurisdiction of the Central Area Planning Commission, including downtown and areas immediately west of the Harbor Freeway (see figure 14.1), has absorbed close to 30 percent of new multifamily construction, almost a quarter of all new office space, and nearly half of all new retail floor space built in Los Angeles since the start of the new millennium, which is significantly greater than its share of the total city land area (9.9 percent) and its share of the total population (18.3 percent).

Perhaps most striking is that this growth has occurred even as the CRA, subject to greater political control by the City Council, has shifted its attention away from downtown. During the late 1980s, more than 70 percent of all funds spent by the redevelopment agency flowed to project areas downtown. As figure 14.2 shows,

Table 14.1 NEW CONSTRUCTION PERMITS IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 2000–2009

	Downtown Planning Area ^a	Central Area Planning Commission Jurisdiction ^b
Share of Citywide Population, 2009	0.9%	18.3%
Share of Citywide New Residents, since 2000	3.1%	24.1%
Share of Citywide Land Area, 2009	0.6%	9.9%
Share of New Single Family Dwelling Units, 2000–2009	0.0%	4.7%
Share of New Multi-Family Dwelling Units, 2000–2009	3.9%	28.2%
Share of New Office Floor Space (square feet), 2000–2009	10.1%	23.3%
Share of New Industrial Floor Space (s.f.), 2000–2009	2.6%	5.4%
Share of New Retail Floor Space (s.f.), 2000–2009	21.8%	47.2%

Source: Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Demographics Research Unit, "Annual Building Permit Activity," various years.

^a This refers to Los Angeles's Central City Community Plan area, an administrative boundary that stretches from the Harbor Freeway on the west to Alameda Street on the east and covers most of downtown. See figure 14.1.

^b Includes Hollywood, Wilshire, Westlake, Central City, and Central City North community plan areas.

beginning in the 1990s, the CRA shifted focus to other parts of the city as spending downtown continued to fall. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, less than one-third of all LA redevelopment spending was invested in the city's commercial center. Growing scarcity of public dollars and the CRA's waning commitment to downtown redevelopment has helped transform the nature of the downtown revival, giving an outsized role to the private sector.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE STAPLES CENTER: THE NEW MEGAPROJECTS

During the Bradley era, downtown redevelopment efforts focused primarily on the construction of office space to create jobs for suburban dwellers living in other parts of the city. Indeed, despite the rise of other major job centers in quickly growing parts of Southern California—Riverside, San Bernardino, and, to a smaller extent, Orange counties—central Los Angeles has remained one of the leading employment centers in the five-county region during the past three decades (Giuliano et al. 2007). However, by the 1990s, the anonymous office towers that left downtown a virtual ghost town after dark had fallen out of favor. Following the lead of many other American central cities, Los Angeles embraced what urbanist Peter Eisinger has called "the politics of bread and circuses"—redevelopment efforts centered on entertainment, sports, and high-end retail designed to attract out-of-town visitors and the money of middle-class shoppers (Eisinger 2000).



Figure 14.1
 Central Area Planning Commission Jurisdiction
 Source: Adapted by Steve Erie from materials from Los Angeles Department of City Planning.

Since the mid-1990s, major construction projects in downtown Los Angeles have centered around two competing megaproject development clusters, each championed by a major private-sector booster. Figure 14.3 displays the location of these two clusters in the Central City Community Plan area, and their proximity to Skid Row. In the south, adjacent to the city's convention center that first opened in 1971, Denver entertainment mogul Philip Anschutz has overseen the construction of a massive sports and entertainment complex anchored by the Staples Center sports arena and the Nokia Theater. Just over a mile to the north, wealthy housing developer and philanthropist Eli Broad has focused his efforts on promoting the Grand Avenue project, a major private development on city- and county-owned land next to the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

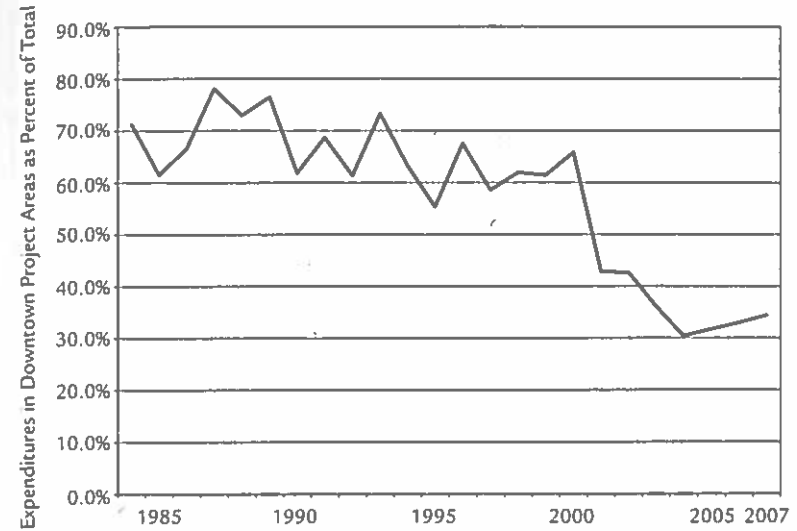


Figure 14.2
 Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency Expenditures
 Source: Compiled from California State Controller, *Community Redevelopment Agencies Annual Report*, various years.

Staples Center

In 1997, the city entered into an agreement with the Anschutz-owned LA Arena Development Company to build a major sports complex downtown. For the city, the project had two primary purposes. First, the development could help to revitalize the neighborhood of South Park, a seventy-block industrial area filled with empty parking lots, boarded-up buildings, and vacant offices. In addition, the new arena promised to lure the Lakers basketball team from their home in nearby Inglewood, and to provide a new stadium for the city's other NBA team, the Clippers, as well as its professional hockey team, the Kings. Under an initial agreement signed between the City Council and the developer, the city pledged \$70.5 million in public funds toward the estimated \$200 million cost of the construction (the final cost of the Staples Center would actually be close to \$375 million), to be paid off over the next three decades using new tax dollars expected to be generated by the project.

Despite overwhelming city council support, the project was opposed by San Fernando Valley Councilman Joel Wachs, who objected to the subsidies being offered to the wealthy private developer. Although on the losing side of the council vote, Wachs moved to qualify a citywide ballot referendum to give LA voters final say over the future of the project. Coming at the height of the Valley secession movement, it was a vote other city leaders were eager to avoid. Using the threat of the referendum as leverage, the city reopened negotiations with the developer to address Wachs's concerns, winning additional concessions from the developer. In addition to reducing the public contribution to the project, the city won a guarantee from the Arena

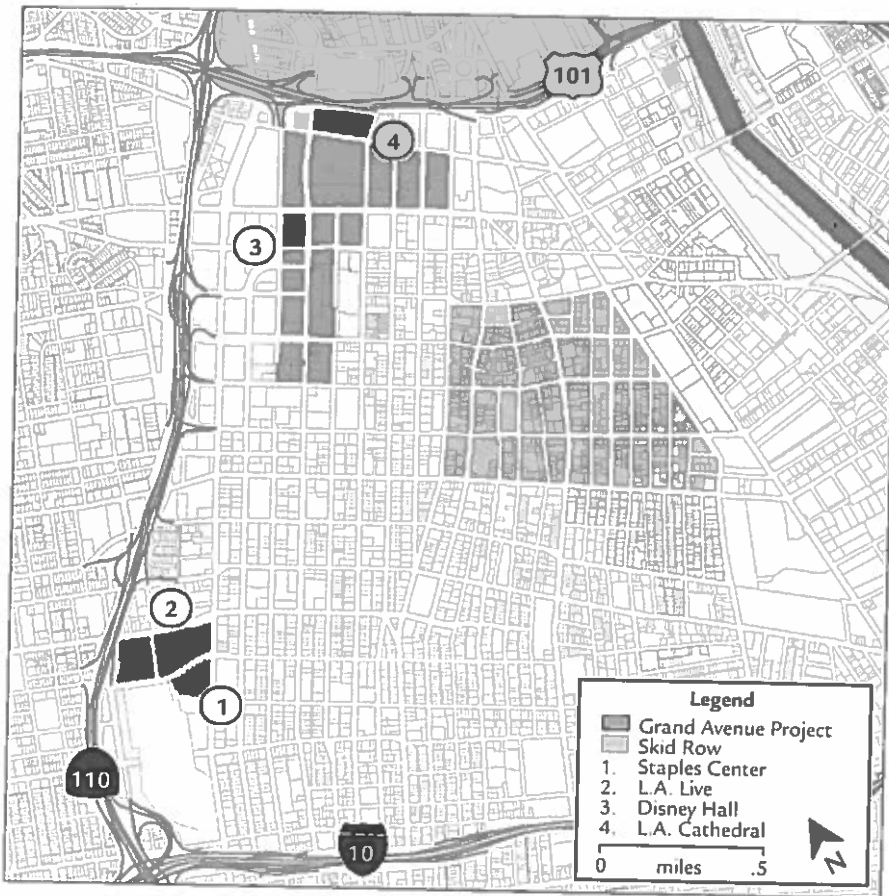


Figure 14.3
Downtown Megaproject Clusters and Skid Row
Source: Forrest Stuart.

Development Company to cover the cost of the city's annual payment needed to service the bonds from the project if the revenue generated by the development fell short, shifting the financial risk from the city to the Anschutz-owned company.

The final agreement, which Wachs called "the best arena proposal ever negotiated in the United States" (quoted in Parlow 2002), largely set the parameters for future development downtown. By capping the city's expected contribution and making public subsidies contingent on the creation of new city revenues, the Staples Center project significantly limited taxpayer costs and financial risk. In contrast to earlier redevelopment projects, the developer, rather than the city, would provide the primary financing. In addition, the CRA, the city's historic champion of downtown renewal, largely played a small supporting role. Although the redevelopment agency agreed to contribute \$12 million toward the cost of public improvements in the area, the project was negotiated directly by the City Council, and the city's contribution was

to be funded directly out of Los Angeles's general budget. Overall, despite the public subsidies, the project appears to have produced a net positive impact on the city budget, with the benefits from the Staples Center construction exceeding the economic impacts of many other stadium construction projects in other cities (Baade 2003).

LA Live

Immediately after the opening of the Staples Center, the Anschutz Entertainment Group announced plans for the construction of a major entertainment complex on 27 acres of nearby commercial land. Anchored by the arena and a new 7,100-seat theater, the \$2.5 billion project sought to make downtown the city's entertainment destination. In addition to more than a dozen upscale restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, the construction included a 54-story hotel-condo tower to house a new five-star hotel and more than 1,000 hotel rooms (Reynolds 2010).

As with the Staples Center, the city's redevelopment agency played a marginal role in the LA Live project, although the plans relied heavily on public dollars. The California Public Employees Retirement System, an independent agency charged with managing the pensions of state- and local-government employees, provided key financing. In 2007, a controversial bill passed by state lawmakers also gave the Anschutz Entertainment Group access to \$30 million from a recently approved state-wide affordable housing bond (McGreevy and Hyman 2007). Finally, in a controversial decision, the city agreed to give the Anschutz Entertainment Group the revenues from the hotel taxes to be collected on rooms built as part of the project for the next twenty-five years, representing a subsidy of almost \$250 million.

In 2012, the Anschutz Entertainment Group moved ahead with plans to build a \$1 billion football stadium adjacent to the LA Live complex. Structured much like the Staples Arena project, the city has agreed to provide upfront public financing for the new stadium in exchange for the developer's commitment to cover any shortfall if new revenue generated from the project proves insufficient to repay the city's costs. However, the announcement in late 2012 that Philip Anschutz had put the Anschutz Entertainment Group up for sale raised new doubts about the viability of the project and the financial commitments made by the company to the city.

Los Angeles Cathedral and Walt Disney Concert Hall

Even as Anschutz focused on his efforts in South Park, two privately financed projects were changing the face of the northern part of downtown. In the mid-1990s, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles hired world-renowned Spanish architect Rafael Moneo to design a replacement for the Saint Vibiana Cathedral, which had been seriously damaged by the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Moneo's unusual post-modern design, marked by the absence of right angles, won wide acclaim, and the



Figure 14.4
Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels
Source: Photo by Kevin Kay.

new Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels opened in 2002. Figure 14.4 shows the new cathedral.

Just down the street, another famous architect, Guggenheim Museum designer Frank Gehry, had begun work on a new facility to house the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. The project was the brainchild of Walt Disney's widow Lillian, who donated \$50 million in 1987 for the effort. In the early 1990s, Los Angeles County spent more than \$100 million on a new parking garage atop which the new Walt Disney Concert Hall would be built. However, the project remained dormant for years as its supporters struggled to raise the necessary private funds. In 1996, then-Mayor Richard Riordan drafted billionaire Eli Broad to spearhead a new fundraising campaign. Both Riordan and Broad, along with supermarket mogul Ronald Burkle, would eventually become the biggest personal funders of the project, with the remaining money coming from local foundations, banks, oil companies, and a donation from the Walt Disney Company. With a final cost of more than \$270 million, the Walt Disney Concert Hall opened in 2003. In 2007, the nonprofit corporation responsible for building the facility transferred the title over to the county. Figure 14.5 shows the Walt Disney Concert Hall.



Figure 14.5
Walt Disney Concert Hall
Source: Library of Congress (Photo by Carol Highsmith).

Grand Avenue Project

Shortly after the completion of the new music venue, Broad spearheaded the creation of the Grand Avenue Committee, a private organization focused on developing the 25 acres of public land surrounding the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Under Broad's leadership, the group hired Gehry to design a major upscale residential and commercial center with more than 3.2 million square feet of housing, office, and retail space, including a new museum to house Broad's extensive art collection (Ouroussoff 2004). Broad also took the lead in selecting the developer for the project. With an estimated cost of \$3 billion, Gehry's final design for the Grand Avenue Project included four high-rise residential towers, a boutique hotel, and a new 16-acre public park. Figure 14.6 displays plans for the proposed megaproject.

To oversee the development, the city and county of Los Angeles—owners of the land on which it would be built—created a joint powers authority that has taken the primary lead in representing the public sector in the negotiations. Under an unusual public-private partnership, the city and the county agreed to turn the land over to the developer on a 99-year lease and use the lease proceeds to pay the cost of necessary road improvements and of the new park construction. Although the redevelopment agency agreed to finance the construction of approximately 500 affordable



Figure 14.6
Proposed Grand Avenue Development Project
Source: Grand Avenue Committee.

housing units, the City Council again provided the primary source of public subsidies. In a deal similar to the LA Live revenue-sharing agreement, the council agreed to divert new hotel tax revenues to be generated by the project to the developer, a transfer estimated to cost the city \$60 million (DiMassa 2007).

However, the collapse of the Southern California housing market in the wake of the global financial crisis has raised new questions about the viability of the Grand Avenue project, which has suffered a series of construction delays. In 2008, the state pension system pulled out its investment from the project, citing its heavy exposure to the downtown real estate market, leaving the developer significantly short of financing. In late 2010, the project's developers announced that the groundbreaking would be delayed until at least 2013, six years after work was originally scheduled to begin, due in large part to difficulty securing financing (Linthicum 2010). The elimination of all local redevelopment agencies by the state legislature in 2011 also threatened roughly \$5 million in public dollars promised by the CRA to pay for affordable housing in the Grand Avenue project. Although a new public park included in the project opened in 2012, the developer has suggested that the commercial and retail portions of the project will need to be scaled back substantially to reflect slower economic growth and new market realities after the 2008 financial crisis.

CONTAINING SKID ROW

The quickened pace of development associated with the Downtown Renaissance, including the influx of new residents and shoppers flocking to the area's new retail establishments, has lent added urgency to city efforts to clean up Skid Row, Los Angeles's most concentrated site for the homeless and the social services they rely on. While land-use authority and access to public dollars have been the primary tools through which the CRA has historically influenced the development of downtown, the LAPD, under an ambitious new police chief William Bratton, has become a primary policy lever guiding the trajectory of change in the area. This section traces the development of Skid Row, focusing on its regulation throughout the last half century under what is locally referred to as the "policy of containment"—a collective effort to cordon off the area's associated populations and behaviors to approved downtown spaces. To many observers, including much of the impoverished and homeless population now residing in Skid Row, the policy represents a darker, more coercive side of downtown revival, as the LAPD has joined private developers in filling the vacuum left by the weakening of CRA powers.

Los Angeles's Skid Row was forged by an early history similar to that found in other urban centers at the beginning of the twentieth century (Anderson 1923; Rossi 1989). Proximity to the Los Angeles River and a flat topography made the fifty-block area—between 3rd and 7th Streets, bounded by Main Street on the west and Alameda Street on the east—ideal for the development of the packing and shipping industry (Spivack 1998). As the final stop of the transcontinental railroad, Skid Row housed much of the swelling migrant labor force and was the point of entry into the city for those heading westward during the Depression of the 1930s, the Dust Bowl, and World War II. Over time, single room occupancy hotels, shelters, and inexpensive retail stores developed to accommodate the influx of inhabitants. By the 1960s, however, much of the migratory labor force had given way to those more stereotypically associated with Skid Row districts—homeless men, who were often dependent on alcohol and unemployed.

For downtown' development interests, images of wayward and drunken homeless men in the doorways of skyscrapers lingered as a continual threat to development potential. In response, private developers represented by the Central City Association formed a Committee for Central City Planning made up of twenty-two executives and property owners from downtown's largest businesses. In 1972, the committee completed its "Silverbook" plan—a strategy paralleling those taken up at the same time by other major urban centers, including Chicago and New York, that were similarly wrestling with blighted areas, social service hubs, and low-cost housing near central business districts (Hoch and Slayton 1989). According to the plan, much of Skid Row's physical infrastructure would be bulldozed to make way for a university complex, police center, central library, and parking garages. However, as it circulated among interested parties, the Silverbook plan generated significant controversy. Similar to the case of Venice, a conflict between progressive and quality-of-life interests surfaced in downtown.

Skid Row's long-standing homeless advocates anticipated that the area's traditional population would be forced to other areas of the city that lacked the social services facilities serving Skid Row residents. Fearing that their own areas would become the "new" Skid Row, representatives from several communities bordering downtown joined with advocates to challenge the demolition of Skid Row. Poised against downtown business interests, this unlikely coalition pressured City Hall to devise an alternate plan for dealing with Skid Row.

In 1976, the Los Angeles Community Design Center, an advocacy planning agency charged with the design, presented a plan that called on the city to take steps to contain Skid Row physically. Rather than disperse the population, the proposal sought to essentially quarantine inhabitants within an acceptable geographic area. According to the planning document, the area would be redeveloped to act as a magnet to "Skid Row types" residing in downtown and the rest of the region (Los Angeles Community Design Center 1976). Only by doing so, its authors argued, could they hope to reduce Skid Row's influence on the rest of the central city.

This would be accomplished through a series of measures. First, "inducements" would "cause the Skid Row resident to stay within the area of containment rather than wander about the Central City" (Los Angeles Community Design Center 1976, 7). Through deliberate control of the allocation and location of housing stock, low-cost housing within Skid Row was slated for improvement, while similar housing outside of the area would be discouraged. Additionally, the plan called for the gradual elimination of those businesses—most notably liquor stores and bars—traditionally associated with Skid Row. Social services (including shelters, rescue missions, and soup kitchens) and amenities (including benches, restrooms, and parks) would also be relocated from other areas of downtown to the confines of Skid Row.

The second component of the containment plan involved the construction of "buffers" to "reinforce the edges existing between Skid Row and other land uses" (Los Angeles Community Design Center 1976, 7). Light industrial development would be encouraged along Skid Row's borders, while the physical environment would be "hardened" (Jeffery 1977) through measures such as the locking of trashcans or increasing the brightness of streetlights in areas used by homeless individuals for sleeping. If designed successfully, the plan's architects argued, "When the Skid Row resident enters the buffer, the psychological comfort of the familiar Skid Row environment will be lost; he will not be inclined to travel far from the area of containment" (Los Angeles Community Design Center 1976, 12). In this manner, Skid Row's "area of influence" would be significantly decreased.

While never formalized as official policy, the CRA took a number of steps to implement the containment plan that continues to the current day. By 1987, ten years after the completion of the strategy, the agency had spent or committed \$58 million for homeless assistance programs, most of which were located in the downtown area (Goetz 1992). CRA-funded agencies providing emergency shelter and transitional housing have been relocated within Skid Row's boundaries. In 1989, for instance, the CRA provided \$6.5 million for the relocation of the Union Rescue Mission from elsewhere in downtown to the center of the containment area. Since that time, the Union Rescue Mission has grown to become the largest rescue mission in the country.

Today it is flanked by two additional "mega-shelters"—the Los Angeles Mission and the Midnight Mission—which, rivaling the size of the Union Rescue Mission, were also relocated from outside Skid Row. By 2000 the gradual growth, saturation, and consolidation of services under these few large facilities created a new Skid Row, home to 40 percent of all city shelter beds and 25 percent of all county shelter beds (DeVerteul 2006).

In a move that worked to increase the pull of Skid Row on downtown's transient population, the CRA founded the Single Room Occupancy Housing Corporation (SRO Housing) in 1984, to acquire and rehabilitate the aging single-room occupancy hotels in the area. As a direct subsidiary of the CRA, SRO Housing has intentionally focused its efforts in the heart of Skid Row, rather than along its perimeter, in an effort to further shrink the presence of the population in the rest of the downtown development area.

The pull of new single-room occupancy developments in the heart of Skid Row was accompanied by a push from the elimination of affordable housing units in the rest of the downtown area. Broader urban planning policies, most notably the 1999 adaptive reuse ordinance discussed above, paved the way for the conversion of older and economically distressed buildings into new apartments, lofts, and hotels. The Los Angeles Housing Department reports that between 2000 and 2003, 982 residential hotel units were eliminated, whereas only 100 units had been lost in the four years preceding the ordinance. As "housing of last resort," these units may be the



Figure 14.7
Skid Row (San Julian and Sixth Streets)
Source: Photo by Forrest Stuart.

last stop before homelessness. With a shrinking housing stock, many low-income downtown residents were left with two options—either leave downtown altogether or migrate further into Skid Row.

The result has been a steady and constant increase in the Skid Row population. Simultaneously, as figure 14.7 shows, the traditional image of the aged, white, alcohol-dependent “bum” has been replaced by a demographic make-up dominated by working-age African Americans seeking employment opportunities, affordable housing, and social services that were lost or removed from other areas.

As Goetz (1992) notes, while Skid Row has been manufactured in large part through urban planning policy, the everyday task of containing and regulating Skid Row has fallen primarily to the LAPD. By creating a space where the behaviors typically associated with Skid Row are tolerated, the police are called upon to use the full force of the law to prevent this behavior when encountered in other downtown areas. For roughly thirty years, police attempts to regulate Skid Row largely mirrored the debate over the Silverbook plan, which was characterized by various attempts to funnel and relocate homeless populations to acceptable city blocks, but met with repeated and successful community resistance. This process was exemplified throughout the 1980s as former LAPD Chief Daryl Gates initiated a series of homeless sweeps in which officers approached individuals and ordered them to relocate, arresting those who refused. Police sweeps were often accompanied by city maintenance trucks that



Figure 14.8
LAPD Homeless Sweep in Skid Row
Source: Photo by Forrest Stuart.

swept up any possessions left behind. Figure 14.8 shows the intersection of Crocker and 5th Streets in Skid Row immediately following a homeless sweep by LAPD officers and city maintenance workers. Blocks are cordoned off at both ends by flatbed trucks that transport items collected by bulldozers.

Actions by community organizations and a suit brought by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles forced Mayor Tom Bradley to cease the efforts and develop a softer, more comprehensive policy to deal with homelessness across Los Angeles. Simultaneously, Skid Row activists forced City Hall on a number of occasions to convert parcels of land owned or leased by the city into large, outdoor “homeless encampments” to accommodate those unable to secure shelter or acquire more permanent housing arrangements. One such camp, referred to as the “Dust Bowl Hilton” was a 12-acre plot located on the outskirts of the containment area with space for roughly 500 inhabitants. With constant pressure from coalition groups, Bradley negotiated a number of extensions for the facility, preventing the Regional Transit District from evicting its residents to make room for the city’s new light rail system (Goetz 1992). In sum, throughout this period Skid Row’s collection of charitable and volunteer organizations was successful in not only preventing the city from eliminating the services or populations that characterized the area but also concentrating and increasing services.

However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the back and forth that characterized this arrangement—between the city’s criminal justice institutions and Skid Row’s philanthropic organizations—swung in a drastically more punitive direction, culminating in a wave of aggressive policies that even former Chief Gates might never have imagined. A number of commentators explain this shift by pointing to the 2002 hiring of former New York Police Chief William Bratton to head the LAPD. Before arriving in Los Angeles, Bratton had been a member of the monitoring team that oversaw the implementation of the Federal Consent Decree in the wake of the city’s Rampart scandal of the late 1990s.⁸ Even earlier, while directing the NYPD, Bratton developed, applied, and systematized a “broken windows” policing strategy that many credit for stemming crime and reducing disorder across the city.

Arguably the best-known contemporary law enforcement paradigm, the broken windows approach postulates that if left unattended, minor forms of disorder—including littering, panhandling, jaywalking, and sitting on the sidewalk—produce neighborhood decline and ultimately increase levels of serious crime (Wilson and Kelling 1982). According to the theory, the presence of disorder signals that an area is uncared for, causing law-abiding citizens to move away while signaling to criminals that their crimes will go undetected and unpunished. Viewing Skid Row through the lens of broken windows, the exact behaviors designed to be contained, and to some extent accepted, under the 1976 plan were likely to be reevaluated as a danger not only to adjacent downtown neighborhoods but also to Skid Row’s own residents seeking vital social services (for a more detailed discussion, see Stuart 2011).

However, Bratton’s hiring was but one piece of a puzzle tied inextricably to alterations in the institutional landscape of Skid Row itself. As described above, while the Containment Plan did in fact preserve the facilities of the area’s most vocal advocates, the efforts to concentrate amenities within the boundaries of Skid Row also brought

new organizations to the area. As a result, a very different set of institutions and actors came to be viewed as the true “representatives” of the downtrodden—from a coalition of progressive charitable organizations and public interest lawyers to the small-number of “mega-shelters” supported as part of CRA’s funding strategy.

When Bratton announced that he would launch sweeps reminiscent of those attempted by Gates twenty years earlier (Winton and Sauerwein 2003), prominent representatives from within these newcomer organizations responded with an unprecedented level of support, forming a partnership in the new police efforts. A recent analysis of meeting minutes and internal communications shows that a year prior to the announcement, the LAPD hired George Kelling, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and one of the originators of the broken windows theory, to anticipate and preempt any anticipated public backlash (Blasi 2007). At a price to the city of over a half million dollars, Kelling recruited the head of the Union Rescue Mission and the leadership of several other newer facilities to, according to Kelling, “get to the moral high ground” by developing a “coordinated strategy for communication to the press regarding the forthcoming effort in Skid Row” (Blasi 2007). Together, the group prepared media statements and newspaper op-ed pieces that were designed to tap into various public sympathies, explaining the policing strategy in terms of alternate issues such as child safety and public health.

Several years of police sweeps and mega-shelter support culminated in 2006 when the city launched its Safer Cities Initiative (SCI) in Skid Row. At the annual cost of \$6 million, SCI deployed an additional fifty patrol officers, and twenty-five to thirty additional narcotics and mounted officers to police the fifty blocks (Blasi 2007). Not only did the launch of SCI distinguish Skid Row as home to arguably the largest concentration of standing police forces in the country (Blasi and Stuart 2008), the LAPD made over 9,000 arrests and issued roughly 12,000 infraction citations in the initiative’s first year alone. Given an estimate of the Skid Row population as between 12,000 and 15,000 inhabitants, these numbers represent an arrest/citation rate nearly 70 times higher than those in other parts of the city (Blasi 2007).

Data produced in 2009 by a homeless legal clinic, administered by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Community Action Network, provides a more detailed look at the initiative’s intensified police practices. An analysis of intakes to the clinic between January 1 and November 4 of that year demonstrates that much police contact stems from minor pedestrian infractions. Almost 90 percent of the citations handled by the clinic were written for some form of crosswalk violation, such as crossing during a flashing red hand, crossing at a red light, or jaywalking. Many of these violations were attributable to serious physical disabilities that inhibited individuals from making it fully across an intersection in the time allotted by city traffic lights. In fact, only 23 percent of those receiving citations did not report a physical disability. While the city proposed a counterbalance in the form of its Streets or Services (SOS) program, emphasizing rehabilitation and drug treatment as nonpunitive responses to misdemeanor offenses, SOS received only \$100,000 in funding. This budgetary disparity was clearly evident by May 2007, only nine months into SCI policing. The LAPD reported making 7,428 misdemeanor

arrests, yet only thirty-four individuals completed the SOS program during that time period (Blasi and Stuart 2008).

As the media’s interest in Skid Row has increased in recent years, a number of national and international commentators have looked to these numbers to question whether the new policing strategy may actually exacerbate the conditions of poverty and homelessness. After a 2008 tour of the area, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance condemned the disparate law enforcement in Skid Row (McGreal 2009). Largely because of Skid Row policing, Los Angeles recently was named America’s “meanest city” in a study conducted by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (Anderson 2009; Dahmann 2010).

CONCLUSION

Surveying the last two decades of downtown development in the city, *Los Angeles Times* architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne has wondered, “Is this any way to build a city?” (Hawthorne 2010). Under the new institutional and political landscape that has emerged from the ashes of the once-formidable Bradley-era growth coalition, Hawthorne has lamented that the city government’s commitment to the public realm “has withered to almost nothing.” “Instead,” he has written, “we are experimenting with a new approach that asks developers to build quasi-public space, ringed with retail, in exchange for land, streamlined approval or help with the bottom line” (Hawthorne 2006).

It is almost certainly the case that the answer to Hawthorne’s concern depends on where one stands. From the point of view of the middle-class homeowners living around the city’s periphery, the decentralizing and democratizing reforms embedded into Los Angeles’s city charter have delivered on their demands to increase community control over local land-use policy. For Los Angeles’s growing impoverished homeless population in Skid Row, the answer is certainly much more ambiguous. What is clear, however, is that the city’s slow-growth movement’s primary victory has been to redirect, rather than slow, the pace of growth in the city, making downtown its new epicenter. Nor, despite shifting the priorities of the CRA, have activists succeeded in eliminating public subsidies for new downtown projects, though they have significantly changed how these projects have been financed. Under new, meeker leadership, the CRA has largely surrendered the initiative to private developers, offsetting the public participatory gains made in other neighborhoods. It is a trend that is likely to continue, as the city began work to dismantle the agency under California’s new post-redevelopment era.

It remains to be seen whether Los Angeles’s new approach to physical and economic development can survive and recover in an era of slower economic growth. Already, dark clouds are forming. Of the approximately 110 private residential projects planned for downtown, more than one-third have been delayed or put on hold due to financing challenges, precipitously falling home prices, and broader economic

troubles (DiMassa 2007). Having largely handed over the public reins of development to the private sector, Angelenos must now fully confront both the promise and the peril of reliance on the marketplace.

NOTES

1. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and the neighborhood council system are discussed in the Los Angeles City Charter Sec. 900, et seq.
2. Area planning commissions are discussed in City Charter Sec. 552. While the charter only specified that at least five area planning commissions would be created, the implementing ordinance provided for seven commissions.
3. A total of ninety-one neighborhood councils were certified, though three were eventually decertified.
4. In the Venice context, Councilwoman Russell, a liberal Bradley ally, was a bit controversial. While she had a pro-growth coastal agenda, she was also willing to listen to people. There was so much backlash against development that she formed the Venice Town Council. She was ultimately succeeded by a city planner/environmental activist/coastal commissioner/Venice resident, Ruth Galanter, who was much more interested in protecting the coast and the distinctiveness of Venice. But ultimately Galanter was thrust in the middle of complex development controversies too and could only do so much to favor progressives.
5. The discussion about the formation of conflict in the Venice Neighborhood Council is the result of six years of ethnographic and historical work about neighborhood formation and differentiation in Venice. One of the coauthors regularly attended neighborhood council meetings. During this period, the coauthor interviewed thirty elected board members and regular participants in the audience and had informal conversations with countless others. The open-ended interviews started by asking how individuals first became involved in Venice politics and specifically in the neighborhood council. Commonly lasting one to two hours, the discussion focused on the process of joining and forming the council, participating in interest groups, developing oppositions in Venice, the meaning of political action, and life transitions of activists over time. The interviews were supplemented with regular attendance and observations in meetings, following online discussions, reading local newspapers, and reading distributed candidate biographies and meeting minutes.
6. We use the Central City Community Plan Area as the rough boundaries for downtown.
7. The bylaws are available at <http://www.dlanc.com/bylaws/#Art5>.
8. In the late 1990s, evidence surfaced regarding widespread corruption in LAPD's Rampart Division. Over seventy Rampart officers, in particular members of the Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) Unit, were convicted of a number of offenses including planting false evidence, robbery, perjury, drug sales, and other crimes.

CHAPTER 15

A Land Ethic for the City of Water

KRISTEN VAN HOOREWEGHE, STEVE LANG, AND
WILLIAM KORNBUM

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. . . . In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his [and her] fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.

The fallacy the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and which we now need to cast off, is the belief that economics determines all land-use. This is simply not true. An innumerable host of actions and attitudes, comprising perhaps the bulk of all land relations, is determined by the land-users' tastes and predilections, rather than by his [or her] purse. The bulk of all land relations hinges on investments of time, forethought, skill and faith rather than on investments of cash. As a land-user thinketh, so is [s]he.

Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

For New Yorkers, the meaning of a "land ethic" is rather distant from the rural America Leopold had in mind in the mid-twentieth century, but is very much a strong presence on the land and water. A twenty-first-century urban land ethic necessarily involves a combination of city planning, national environmental regulations, and local citizen activism. We explore the consequences and contradictions of this hybrid approach to urban environmental policy, paying specific attention to the role of citizen activism in engendering a land ethic for a city of water.

In April 2007, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his administration published an ambitious plan for the city's future to the year 2030 (known as PlaNYC 2030). Almost every page of PlaNYC 2030 argues for "greening the city" and making it more environmentally sustainable. Announcing it as "the most sweeping plan to enhance New York's urban environment in the city's modern history," the plan proposes projects to enhance the quality of the city's land, air, water, energy, and