



SPACE TO LEAD:

A CENTURY OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP IN LA

A Report by Future of Cities: Los Angeles

Made possible with support from the Knight Foundation

Future of Cities: Los Angeles (FOC:LA) seeks to strengthen and expand LA's culture of civic leadership by connecting and cultivating new and current civic leaders through convenings, events, and programs across the region. We bring together diverse leaders and stakeholders to spark creative, disruptive thought and dialog about our region's unique social, structural, and political challenges – and opportunities. We believe that through a shared sense of civic identity; through connection across conventional boundaries; and through thoughtful inquiry into LA's past, present, and future, we can create an enduring legacy of locally focused investment that will help build an even more prosperous, livable, and equitable Los Angeles.

Founded in 2004, the ***Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West (ICW)*** is a collaborative teaching, research, and outreach initiative focused on the history and culture of the modern American West. Through ICW, the academic mission of USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences is effectively aligned with the research and educational mission of The Huntington Library.

SPACE TO LEAD:

A CENTURY OF CIVIC LEADERSHIP IN LA

I BELIEVE IN L.A.

L.A. has always been my home. I'm second-generation—daughter of a father born in Boyle Heights in 1919, raised on L.A. stories. My dad took me on one of the last runs of the original Angels Flight and I knew that the great Broadway movie palaces in the 1930s cost 10 cents and you got a free Abba Zabba bar at intermission. I hiked the mountains of Griffith Park, celebrated birthday parties at Genie Land, Bob Baker Marionette, and of course Beverly Park (I liked riding the fast lane on Goldie). L.A. Dodgers and Roman Gabriel's Rams were central in my life.

Los Angeles also grabbed my professional life from the beginning, with Assemblymember Richard Katz in the northeast San Fernando Valley. Then, the honor of working for Tom Bradley. Next, the founding of two L.A.-centric organizations, the volunteer action center L.A. Works and the civic-focused Jewish Federation New Leaders Project, plus two decades on the L.A. County Human Relations Commission. And I was a kid in the candy store consulting at *Los Angeles* magazine.

Viscerally the frontier imagery of the West feels like second nature. On the frontier, we are not bound by the conventions of the past.

I believe in cities.

I see the energy, the promise, where the best and brightest have an opportunity to mix and dream and build. The opportunity to set a tone. And now, the obligation to push for inclusive cities, where all can rise. Cities have never been more key to ensuring the health and wellbeing of their inhabitants.

I believe in leadership.

From dedicated grassroots leaders to generous philanthropists, a great city needs a devoted cadre of people who can catalyze energy and movement, who are willing to foster important connection across all lines, helping ideas meet resources.

Furthermore, leadership must have an ever-evolving definition as times and needs change, as this study demonstrates.

I believe we need more people to make L.A. a priority.

We are at another crossroad here in L.A... where we have the chance to fulfill our promise to be a world-class metropolis of and for the future.

Look to the past to see where we are going, the authors of this study tell us.

The players may have changed but the stage remains. We have new and different industries, an ever more diverse population, new and ample 21st-century challenges, and new groups arising to respond to them.

Let's support those efforts and push the frontier. Let's swell the ranks of those willing to take on civic roles and help make new histories as advocates, philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, public servants, state and local commissioners, artists, writers, and more.

Look at a map of the Los Angeles region, simultaneously dense and sprawling. Look at the history of our civic institutions, at once unburdened and unsupported by other cities' long-established ways of doing things. It is up to us to take the good fortune of our diversity and innovation, our creativity and perennial newness, and, indeed, our geography *and history* to develop something even more extraordinary that will last for generations of Angelenos to come. We have the *space to lead*.



Donna Bojarsky

Founder and President, Future of Cities: Los Angeles

PREFACE

Los Angeles, a unique microcosm of culture, grit, and creativity, has a history that must be known in order for us to grow. I know this because I've lived here all my life. I grew up in South Los Angeles, graduated from Hamilton High School, and have a degree from the University of Southern California. I've watched this community change and have helped it grow. One characteristic I can point to as a motif throughout my life here is the power of community organizing and civic engagement. And the most effective civic leadership is born from grassroots organizing, the importance of which, especially today, should never be misunderstood or underestimated.

Throughout my time as an organizer and beyond, local groups have been the wind of the movement. At the height of the crack cocaine and gang crisis of the 1990s, it was the neighborhoods coming together with Community Coalition to address the raging health crisis of drug addiction and HIV and AIDS that had enveloped our community, but was largely ignored by the outside world. Our methods were simple: by advocating for policy solutions that built up the community, instead of tearing it apart through punitive drug laws and violent policing tactics, we meaningfully addressed the issues facing us. The power is, and always will be, with the people.

When I was elected to represent Los Angeles at the state level, I applied the same organizing model. In 2008, California confronted its greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, and I was elected Assembly Speaker. In that role, again, I placed immense value in sustained, collaborative civic leadership as we fast-tracked billions of dollars for infrastructure projects to aid Californians who had been affected by the national economic crisis.

Now, I am currently serving in Washington, DC, in the middle of my fourth term, still proud to represent the city where I grew up. Never straying far from those community organizing roots, I'm bringing the best of Los Angeles to our efforts at reforming our child welfare system. Who would know that experience better than current and former foster youth themselves? So I led the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth to bring more than 100 current and former foster youth to meet with their Members of Congress to discuss the issues that continue to affect them the most. Again, the power was with the people.

Grassroots activism and civic engagement, rooted in our local histories, is what makes communities great. Future of Cities: Los Angeles is an important initiative helping to do just that as it encourages civic-minded leaders to collectively create the brightest possible future for Los Angeles. FOC:LA's new report, *Space to Lead: A Century of Civic Leadership in Los Angeles*, offers vital lessons from the diverse history of civic initiatives across sectors and communities.

As Los Angeles moves towards the future, it carries its past. We remember 1932 and 1984 when we plan for 2028. We remember the Unrest as we strive for peace. We remember division as we seek and find unity. Without knowing our history, how could we best proceed? It's on us—the people—to lead that charge.



Karen Bass
Member of Congress for the 37th District of California
67th Speaker of the California State Assembly
Founder, Community Coalition

PART ONE

Introduction

The history of civic leadership in Los Angeles is a story of diffusion. From recreation to revitalization, across geographies, economies, and political structures, the past one hundred years has illuminated the promise and the peril that beckons when civic leaders engage one another in this diffuse landscape to advance visions of the public good. Whether a persistent paradox or an ongoing tension, the juxtapositions of coordination, diffusion, partnership, and fragmentation have been defining characteristics of civic conflicts and collaborations in Southern California.

At their best, civic leaders have served a vital intermediary role between elected officials and the grassroots: supporting, constraining, prodding, demanding, and more—inspiring action on all sides and insuring that successes are sustained. Their achievements tell us that Los Angeles is a place where culturally and generationally diverse individuals *can* connect place and perspective to action. Building upon authenticity and authority growing out of local ties to specific neighborhoods (even particular streets or blocks), these leaders sought change and made a difference. Their stories tell of personal relationships that transcended position and geography in building coalitions of shared interests and values, solving problems by bridging diverse but not impossibly divergent domains. Their triumphs shine with creativity and adaptability. These were (and are) Angelenos unafraid to demand the good where they saw it lacking, and to seek footholds for brave new ideas. These legacies are important and powerful.

These histories also offer us a usable past. As the 21st century deepens, contextualizing the present and anticipating the future with an eye on the past can be powerfully catalytic. Our recent history offers a framework for a meaningful civic identity to carry us through the emerging 21st century. The great collective enterprises of the first quarter of the current century have not emerged, context-free, from a screenwriter's imagination and a studio set. History matters: it obligates us to learn more, know more, and, thus grounded, do more. This is true across all facets of metropolitan challenge, and Los Angeles is no exception: all places, all cities, incubate better ideas and better leaders when history is at the table of imagining and decision-making.

As cross-sector efforts to enhance urban health and wellbeing gain visibility, the history of civic problem solving in Los Angeles offers insights and lessons through which to forge an improved collective future. Our region's vast geography, diffuse power structure, and diverse population have helped make it a trailblazer. However, inattention to history, persistent political fragmentation, and an artificially narrowed civic elite have occluded our record of innovation.

Indeed, history complicates all that we have inherited from the Angelenos and the Los Angeles that pre-dates us. Like all stories, our history can inspire and can reveal the sticky intricacies that vex problem solvers at any level of engagement. No less than the scientific uplift efforts of the turn of the 20th century, the reconfiguration of metropolitan mobility through mass transit necessarily entails the imperfect and uncomfortable imposition of urban planning order on roadways built to extend (some might say indulge) individual frontier freedom through the single-occupancy automobile. The remaking of the Los Angeles River is no less ambitious than the raising of the Music Center—and no less fraught than the razing of Bunker Hill or the obliteration of Chavez Ravine. And even if today's dividing lines involve class alongside race and ethnicity, taming the twin-headed Cerberus of homelessness and housing insecurity necessarily has reanimated battles over justice, equity, and inclusion that have been waged since the earliest days of redlining and the criminalization of racial difference.

The case studies examined in Part Two of this report look through the lens of diffusion at the history of civic leadership in Los Angeles, exploring success and failure, public and private initiatives, and the impact or contributions made to the public good. Viewing diffusion as wholly negative would be a mistake; rather, the unique quality of diffusion in Los Angeles has long been both a strength and a challenge. Diffusion has opened up spaces, often grassroots spaces, for unanticipated leadership. It has created opportunities for greater civic engagement through ordinary people seeking change, as well as through the emergence of powerful and charismatic leaders. Diffusion and fragmentation have been excuses for inaction and left room for conflicts to fester—but they also have facilitated collaboration and cross-sector cooperation through sometimes surprising and unanticipated alliances (even those born of tension).

Over the last century, private citizens and community organizations have often joined with elected officials and other quasi-public civic leaders to force progress and achieve mutual goals. Moreover, the region's location on the West Coast and its growth in the late 19th century meant that Los Angeles lacked long-standing American institutions and organizations that might guide (or hinder) its development. Thus, a tangible sense of innovation, experimentation, openness to change, and the welcoming of new ideas are woven into the fabric of life and leadership in Los Angeles.

If necessity is the mother of invention, the diffuse power structure of Los Angeles has necessitated an experimental aesthetic and sense of innovation often revered. Yet there is a danger in such reverence precisely because Los Angeles has a history of erasing or forgetting the past in pursuit of the reinvention of civic identity unmoored from historical precedents or ties. The destruction of Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill are the best-known examples of this amnesia. More recently, the 6th Street Viaduct redesign was touted as a precedent-setting civic project with the potential to transform the public identity of Los Angeles. Early in the project, the viaduct's architect declared the "impermanence of L.A.'s built environment" as a "real advantage" because it allowed the freedom to solve urban problems without being hindered by the past.¹ However, relying solely on innovation and fresh ideas to shape our future without recognition of the past and of exemplary antecedents clashes with our sense of the power of civic history.

Uncovering the hidden civic history of Los Angeles is an essential component for building a strong sense of civic identity. By making these stories accessible, we invite Angelenos to recognize their own histories within them and to find inspiration for greater civic involvement. Los Angeles is at a defining moment in which self-reflection and respect for our shared histories are vital for moving forward with a more inclusive and holistic approach to civic leadership in the 21st century.

The humongous literature on leadership reflects the changing times. Leading by commanding and controlling is out; leading by cooperating and collaborating is in... [but] there is... a yawning gap between leadership theory and leadership practice. Still, the idea... that 21st century leaders need to listen and learn... and the idea that those who are other than leaders should also be heard—these ideas matter.²

— Barbara Kellerman,
Brookings Institution, 2012

What Is 'Civic Leadership' and Where Has it Gone?

Throughout the 20th century, civic leadership frequently meant "the bold action of small, tight-knit circles of local business leaders ... [who] assumed major civic roles and responsibilities" to address regional priorities.³ Business leaders—who often could outlast local elected officials—exerted disproportionate influence based on their "economic power, the long identification of their firms with the city, and their own deep affection for the city." They saw their corporate success as intertwined with the city's success, and "they used their power to rebuild

sections of town, influence the location of public facilities and development projects, make and break mayors, and allocate the resources of foundations they controlled to projects and programs they deemed worthy of support."⁴ "Civic leadership" by this definition usually meant establishing bulwarks to protect or benefit the few rather than the many; the broad influence and narrow agenda of the Committee of 25, backed by the *Los Angeles Times*, is an egregious example of the impact of elite power unchecked and unfettered.⁵ However, this model of business-led leadership has long been in decline, and not only in Los Angeles. In communities nationwide, observers have noted, the "traditional power brokers who dominated civic life have passed on or lost their air of invincibility ...paternalism is

no recipe for prosperity in the twenty-first century."⁶ Economic restructuring has accelerated this decline as national, even multinational, consolidations also have led to the loss of corporate headquarters from many metropolitan areas.⁷ Large local corporations no longer make up the majority of many business communities.

The rapid changes confronting metropolitan regions worldwide have only increased the urgency and complexity of the problems facing urban leaders today. They also have spurred new reflection on the meaning and potential of civic leadership. It is clear that models of civic leadership in which political and business elites—typically wealthy, white men—make the majority of civic



The breadth of the Pacific Electric mass transit system is testament to the early geographic diffusion of urban Los Angeles. By the 1920s, having incorporated regional lines dating back to 1869, spanning San Pedro, Santa Monica, Whittier, San Gabriel, and beyond, it had become the largest electric railway system in the world. Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library.

decisions for others, without consultation or engagement, are neither defensible nor viable.⁸ Since the turn of the 21st century, analyses of leadership theory increasingly have focused on redefining what civic leadership means and how best to harness it for the future.⁹

We define civic leadership as the coordinated deployment of political, social, or financial capital by an individual or group engaged in finding solutions to the complex problems and needs of a town, city, or region. Civic leadership entails virtually “all leadership activity that serves a public purpose in the city region,” and civic leaders can be “found in the public, private, and community/voluntary sectors and they operate at many geographical levels—from the street block to the entire city... and beyond.”¹⁰ Civic leaders aim to motivate others in pursuit of a claimed public good, such as housing, transportation, the arts, the economy, etc., however subjective or contested that claim may be.

Civic leadership occurs in both formal and informal civic spaces—political structures, community organizations, nonprofits, public and private foundations, or public boards and commissions. Civic leadership differs from other kinds of public leadership because it occurs within complex formal and informal structures, rather than the vertical and hierarchical contexts conventionally associated with other leadership types.¹¹ To that end, civic leaders draw on previously established relationships within and across social, economic, and public sectors, and work within existing structures, organizations, and processes, and they frequently create new relationships and organizational structures to pursue their community priorities. However, civic leadership does not preclude or shy away from conflict—whether protests, lawsuits, or political contests—and sometimes long-term progress comes from working

through conflicts among civic actors who all believe they are seeking the public good.¹²

Conversely, weak civic leadership is a significant barrier to urban problem solving. This is in no way to suggest that such gaps are easily soluble. Experts agree there is a “significant civic leadership gap” worldwide, in part because of “unprecedented urban growth and because the nature of the leadership challenges... is changing dramatically” at the local level.¹³ Geographic sprawl, nonprofit fragmentation, government organization, and the lack of strategic goals, among other factors, also have served to limit the ability of civic leaders to enact change.¹⁴

During the 20th century, Los Angeles and California often quietly led the nation in matters of civic innovation, policy making, environmentalism, and other issues. Many older cities across the country now have the sprawl (geographic diffusion) and diversity (social diffusion) that Los Angeles has always experienced. While other cities and regions only relatively recently have found themselves contending with governmental fragmentation and the need for regional approaches, Los Angeles has grappled with these challenges for decades. And Los Angeles has had its share of municipal and economic elites whose power verged on vast. Oil and newspaper barons, transit magnates, studio executives, developers, aviation and aerospace corporations and their chief executives, even water engineers have often spoken from vaunted positions of immense power. Diffusion has not prevented—and well may have enabled—inequitable agglomerations of clout. But in recent decades, even with business-friendly policies designed to attract economic investment, private sector-driven civic leadership has found itself in decline.

Principles of Civic Leadership: From General Theory to Local Practice

Individuals, institutions, and communities are key to the civic process. Effective civic leadership draws on all three; “in any given city, there is a pattern of dispersed leadership. In modern conditions of social complexity power is fragmented and this means that civic leadership involves a process of connecting the fragments.”¹⁵ More importantly, elected leaders can play a crucial role in facilitating cooperation and innovation. Understanding the interplay of individuals, institutions, and communities in Los Angeles civic life over the past century can help inform our sense of civic identity and provide a knowledge base for crafting place-based leadership strategies. Common to the case studies in Part Two of this report are five elements, each of which has influenced the course of events. While they are far from unique to Los Angeles, they have important local applications.

1. Place matters

Because Los Angeles is not a solitary city (and because greater Los Angeles is so vast), civic leaders have to work closely with other cities, with the county, and/or with private organizations to achieve desired outcomes. In other cities, geographic borders are clearly drawn. Here, there are 5 independent cities within the border of the City of Los Angeles and another 82 cities just outside its borders, and the City shares its name with the County of Los Angeles. No other city in the country has this kind of geopolitical ambiguity, especially in a city of this size where no one person is all-powerful. This diffusion of power not only makes leading Los Angeles a challenging prospect, but also requires a metropolitan approach to problem solving. Moreover, Los Angeles civic leaders have operated in ambiguous and power-sharing civic spaces for over a century. Taking a regional approach to civic challenges has long been a strength—borne of necessity, but pioneered and fine-tuned here in Southern California.

2. Charisma matters

The unique quality of diffuse power in Los Angeles has created the space and opportunity for the emergence of powerful and charismatic civic leaders over the last century. In other words, despite the essential need for coalition building and metropolitan problem solving, the region also needs strong leadership simply to capture and hold a great many Angelenos’ attention. At the same time, however, the most effective civic leaders fully understand the specific challenges of their polities and create strategies tailored to those needs by fulfilling the role of inter-group mediator, rather than of hero or savior—“enabl[ing] talented individuals to lead while simultaneously de-personalizing success.”¹⁶ While there are certainly drawbacks and limitations as pertains to whose voices get heard, Los Angeles’s successful civic initiatives are often headed by charismatic leaders able to harness support from an obviously broad constituency.

3. Coalitions matter

The majority of Los Angeles’s most successful civic initiatives have relied on collaboration in all forms to achieve desired goals—even when conflicting civic coalitions have had to resolve conflicts to do so. Private citizens and community organizations frequently joined with elected officials and other quasi-public civic leaders to enact change and to plan for the future of Los Angeles. Without collaboration and alliances, no single sector has been strong enough to achieve results when no one person, government entity, or organization is all-powerful. Angelenos are used to collaborating in a way that few people in other cities experience. While it is not always an easy or seamless process, aligning stakeholder values, interests, priorities, and needs is a key part of our civic culture.

4. Grassroots engagement matters

The diffuse power structure in Los Angeles has also created space outside of politics for greater civic engagement, especially with regard to private and nonprofit organizations. The region’s strongest nonprofits have vastly diffuse donor bases. For example, the Los Angeles Music Center was a mid-century project that could not reach completion with just one donor group; rather, it required support from the entire region and donors from every sector of society. It is just one instance of how a Los Angeles nonprofit led by a charismatic private citizen pioneered a public-private model in pursuit of a vital civic goal. More than that, the record of private and nonprofit civic initiatives demonstrates that leadership has often emerged from the ground up.

5. Innovation matters

Los Angeles’s location on the Pacific Coast and its rapid growth initiated in the late 19th century meant that the region lacked long-standing American institutions and organizations that otherwise might catalyze or inhibit civic development. Out of this vacuum developed a tradition of experimentation and a record of innovation, enabled in part by geographic and political diffusion. However, such qualities are not without challenges. While such an experimental aesthetic is rooted in part in the region’s well-cultivated short-term memory, this long-standing record of innovation has created a very real tension with history and raises the question of what it means to have a history of forgetting.

Recognizing and respecting the past is the key to shaping a well-defined sense of civic identity that values our shared history without losing our collective spirit of creativity. This particular quality may be unique to Los Angeles, in that keen observers have noted its exceptional “island on the land” characteristics. Might this trait provoke problem-solving innovation? Doing so would mean fighting back against the region’s tendency to invent usable pasts in the service of bold and bald profits and historical erasure. To be effective, reference to local history must be clear-eyed and free of nostalgic yearnings for yesteryears that never existed.

Why Does Los Angeles Matter...

Civic leadership matters because done right, it can help bring about economic growth and social equity alike. Communities that intentionally create strong connections among publicly minded leaders from diverse sectors and backgrounds are both more resilient and more creative.¹⁷ Broader understanding of and empowerment of civic leadership—especially in an environment as diffuse as Los Angeles—can transform power. As Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak observe, “a broader vision of city power as organic market and civic power is self-generating. Like interest, it compounds and grows with use, because it opens up new possibilities and brings to the table more resources, more expertise and more innovation.”¹⁸

Effective innovation for future growth and equity depends on honest accounting of lessons learned from respecting and embracing the past. Through a shared sense of civic identity, thoughtful inquiry, and connection across conventional barriers, civic leaders and engaged Los Angeles residents can strengthen the pride of place and gain the tools needed to build a vibrant and cutting-edge metropolis. No less in Los Angeles than elsewhere, successful civic initiatives have been those that encourage coalition building and power sharing shaped by shared regional concerns rather than by narrowly defined civic entities.¹⁹ However, L.A.’s characteristic diffusion frequently has meant gridlock instead of problem solving.

Clearly, more can be done to foster broader and more effective initiatives across diverse sectors, groups, and geographies. This can be achieved by better understanding the history of civic leadership and civic initiatives across the metropolis, and by focusing on the processes that bring about solutions. Angelenos can draw on the lessons of the past to inform our approach to metropolitan problem solving and to shape the future of Los Angeles:

- Regional leadership has worked well when there is a clearly defined goal, which is what the most successful civic initiatives in Los Angeles have in common.
- Those instances of sustained success were often led by civic leaders who deliberately cultivated truly inclusive multiracial, cross-class coalitions.
- Conversely, numerous initiatives, even otherwise successful ones, missed opportunities to take a more holistic approach to civic problem solving. By focusing on a narrow set of solutions, leaders often missed the chance to create broader-based, longer-term cross-sector solutions.

- Initiatives that focused on performing arts, civic aesthetics, parks, and playgrounds generally appealed more widely to all Angelenos, and typically enjoyed widespread support; initiatives that had to do with social justice, labor, economic and racial strife, or redefining citizenship were often more contentious and took longer to achieve even partial success.

Thus, we propose, civic elites stand a better chance of success when they frame problem-solving approaches with attention to historical context, reclaiming and learning from our civic history. Comparative models arise from such historical perspective; lessons of triumph and failure; informed knowledge about precursor actors, groups, coalitions. Acknowledging what was originated or tried before, as well as crediting prior efforts by individuals, groups, and institutions, can pay dividends in the form of progress.

Los Angeles matters because it long has been an innovator and trailblazer in civic problem solving. But how might we inspire deeper civic engagement? How might we create pipelines and greater support for civic leadership in Los Angeles? How might we encourage voices that are more diverse? Experts agree that there are a few key broad action frameworks that can sustain effective metropolitan leadership, including “shared knowledge generation and agenda setting; inclusionary issue framing; collaborative leadership development; coordinated action; and demonstrating success.”²⁰ These, in turn, depend on leadership that can “bring groups of people together to solve problems and do grand things that they cannot do as individuals. To reflect the distributed genius of the city, leaders must be adept at creating and stewarding horizontal relationships rather than issuing and executing hierarchical mandates.”²¹

The first step, therefore, for Los Angeles toward this new model of governance is for leaders—established and emerging alike—to look back in order to look forward. The recent history of Los Angeles amply demonstrates that these frameworks and models of leadership are not beyond our reach, but our grasp has been episodic at best. To be sure, the previous century is full of civic missteps, each with continuing reverberations and consequences. Many of them came from treating diffusion as something other than a social fact. Too many people have mistaken diffusion for entropy or apathy and responded with attempts at command-and-control centralization. But many successful 20th-century leaders understood diffusion for what it is and instead built connections across sectors and power centers. How, then, might we catalyze a spirit of preparation and anticipation for what is to come? How, then, might we bridge where we have been into where we go?

...And Where Do We Go from Here?

Los Angeles is a million and more things. But it is surely a place that, in its communal and individual embrace of the better angels within its very name, has long strived to be about working hard to be better, to reform and repair what is wrong, what is broken, even what is evil. To be sure, this place has had its share of meanness, cruelty, violence, and oppression. History tells us all this, too, and there lurks here still a Los Angeles that earned its 1850s epithet: *Los Diablos*.

We would be naïve and worse to ignore past ugliness. But it is precisely the darker impulses of human and urban nature that provoke this recasting of where history has left us now, at the very doorstep of welcoming the world here in a decade. Our call to action is built upon the foundation of history's lessons, history's contexts and content, and history's ineffable ability to coax inspiration out of the past, in the present, for the future. Our future history calls us to do better; our past history demands it.

Just as Progressive Era reformers envisioned a "Better City" across multiple reform initiatives, so, too, do we in our era think that better cities beckon a hundred years hence. We can toss out—and must—the inlaid obstacles that handicapped those who came before us. Many reached toward an image of human, urban, or regional perfection, and events such as World War I dissuaded them, often permanently and cripplingly. Internal illogic (and worse) fractured democratic rhetoric and aims by way of various discriminatory perspectives, policy tools, and economic levers. Racism, always a strong undercurrent, became a riptide with waves of segregation—residential, educational, occupational, personal. Already by 1910, the city and county of Los Angeles had one of the biggest jail systems in the nation; incarceration reflexes and technologies drew from, and expanded upon, rapidly codifying tendencies of racism and segregation.²² Sexism made fighting for women's suffrage a pitched cultural and electoral battle (recall that men had to be convinced to vote in order for women to be allowed to do so). Improvements in working conditions and calls for industrial freedom were countered and increasingly overcome by "open shop" policies and anti-labor violence.²³ Naïve perspectives on the elasticity of nature gave lie to the notion that Los Angeles and Nature existed in some divine harmony where place

The gift of urban leaders, ironically, is to recognize the potential in fragmentation.

— Bruce Katz and
Jeremy Nowak, 2017

and space met forever in grace. Not so, we've learned. Not so for those who sought to impose an imaginary (and usually centralized) Los Angeles on the very real communities and neighborhoods that constitute the metropolis. Not so for any of it; a Better City movement attuned to the future and its possibilities had best be egalitarian in theory and practice and had best recognize the force of environmental limits and the urgency of environmental reconsiderations large and small. We can out-think our forebears, but only if we interview them at their best and their worst.

When the Olympics first came to Los Angeles in 1932, some thought the sunshine and the coast could magically chase the ill effects of economic collapse away from Los Angeles. Again, not so. But the Great Depression brought with it keystone moments of reform and cross-cultural, cross-sector cooperation: an energetic movement built on cooperative efforts at the neighborhood level; political reformers successfully battling corruption and graft; a vision—unrealized, alas—of urban greenbelt planning that, had it succeeded, would have beautified greater Los Angeles just ahead of wartime and postwar in-fill and made lasting a legacy of an "emerald necklace" in the adolescent metropolis of the far West.

Comes the war, and Los Angeles struggles mightily with the deleterious effects of wartime tension and stress. The capital of unconstitutional discrimination, Los Angeles is the lodestar of the internment movement of Japanese and Japanese Americans and, in its sad wake, the site of more eruptions of anti-Latino violence and extra-legal oppression. But: so, too, is Los Angeles able to fight back against the darkest impulses of the era. Reformers and visionaries build community coalitions of ethnic and racial liberty and wide representation. Electoral and legal battles are fought and won, victories for equity and justice, however imperfect, every bit as signal and significant—or more so—than the episodes of hate and intolerance that provoked them into form and action.

Sail into Los Angeles and the Cold War. Trouble in paradise, to be sure: political intolerance, racial fault lines, red-baiting, and redlining. Yet: movements toward desegregation—halting and imperfect, but important as milestones of a fight worth fighting, training ground for young leaders whose vision of the future leaned more toward a society open than a society closed.

We must remember the 1960s. We must listen to the voices of Watts, that uprising that surprised everyone but the people who felt compelled to rise, and we can look to (some) reforms that the uprising brought about. So, too, must we look to the civic call to action put out by elites like Dorothy Chandler, who, ensconced in wealth and privilege, all the more so deserves close attention for her success in knitting together disparate parts of greater Los Angeles into a philanthropic vision aimed at the downtown cultural scene and center.

If ever there were a need to form a more coherent national community—to marshal identity to persuade Americans that we are in this together, to develop a shared fact base to make inequality, climate change, and other challenges undisputable, to create a set of repeated interactions in which trust is built, not eroded—that time is now.

— Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor, 2015

On the cusp of our own era, L.A.'s second Olympics did much for this place. A sign that the metropolis had matured beyond its upstart status in the 1930s, the 1980s Games proved that a broad-gauged and proud Angeleno identity existed, and that it could be celebrated and sustained. The Games also reinforced darker impulses to clear and control, at a moment of rapid demographic change; in many respects, the civil unrest of 1992 had its proximate cause in already souring police-community relations that militarized in the name of Olympic security. A generation later, we are still asking what we have learned, what has changed, where we can build. How might we welcome 2028 and our region's third Olympic Games clear-eyed as to what it must or could entail, good with bad?

History is yet vibrant and powerful, and in these pages, we see possibilities to render the past usable. *Place matters*: successful interventions bridge and benefit disparate geographies. *Charisma matters*: change happens when strong personal relationships, often across sociodemographic lines, sustain cultural shifts. *The grassroots matter*: command-and-control centralization, even with the best intentions, has never ended well in Los Angeles. *Innovation matters*: the Los Angeles tradition of invention extends no less to civic life than to manufacturing or the media. All of which is to say that *coalitions matter*: we are called

to collaborate to harness Los Angeles's characteristic diffusion and highlight strands of common identity and purpose.

Some might argue that the history of civic leadership in Los Angeles is the story of nominally civic-minded but "socially provincial" and self-interested economic elites—largely white and Protestant—giving way to middle- and working-class networks powered by multi-ethnic community organizing.²⁴ To be sure, effective civic leadership tracks power centers and that is no less true in Los Angeles: diffusion sharpens the shifts. As the 21st century emerges into its own, it seems

clear that community organizing has reshaped civic leadership as much as, if not more than, replaced it—and has the potential to serve as a source of strength and inclusion.²⁵ The question that remains is how each of us, individually and even more so together, might find our own paths to change this place for the better, our shared stewardship of it and one another, and the legacies we create and gift to those who come after us. It is in answering this question that Los Angeles, at its best, has led the nation, and in so doing can lead once more.

Los Angeles needs new visions of and approaches to civic leadership if it is to achieve lasting change and meaningful reform. But our spirit of invention must not be exceptional or parochial: what can we, what must we, learn from other places, other metropolitan contexts, moments, leaders? What roads were taken, what bypassed, and how can we learn from both? Municipalities around the globe are uniting in pursuit of shared priorities for environmental sustainability, resilience, and inclusion; so, too, has the time come for national and international civic pursuit of common "Better City" goals. As a new Olympic moment beckons at the quarter-century mark, we all can write ourselves into the history books. By matching our desire to know more with a shared commitment to do more, we can create *space to lead*.

Further Reading:

Beer, Andrew, and Terry Clower. "Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions." *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 1:1 (2014): 5-20.

Benner, Chris, and Manuel Pastor, *Just Growth: Inclusion and Prosperity in America's Metropolitan Regions*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Benner, Chris, and Manuel Pastor, *Equity, Growth, and Community: What the Nation Can Learn from America's Metro Areas*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2015.

Chrislip, David D. "The New Civic Leadership." Tamarack Institute, 2015.

Chrislip, David D., and Ed O'Malley. *For the Common Good: Redefining Civic Leadership*. Wichita, Kansas: KLC Press, 2013.

Easterling, Doug. "Scaling Up Civic Leadership: Combining Individual-Level Change and Culture Change." *National Civic Review*, Winter 2012: 51-64.

Easterling, Douglas V., and Judith L. Millesen. "Diversifying Civic Leadership: What It Takes to Move from 'New Faces' to Adaptive Problem Solving." *National Civic Review*, Summer 2012: 20-26.

Friesen, Milton. "Social Infrastructure: Underpinning the success of cities." *Municipal World*, Dec 2013: 11-13.

Hambleton, Robin. "Civic Leadership for Auckland. An International Perspective." *Part II of Report of the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance*, Auckland Governance Research Papers, 4 (Mar 2009): 515-552.

Hambleton, Robin. "Power, Place and the New Civic Leadership." *Local Economy*, 30:2 (2015).

Hanson, Royce, Hal Wolman, David Connolly, and Katherine Pearson. "Corporate Citizenship and Urban Problem Solving: The Changing Civic Role of Business Leaders in American Cities." The George Washington Institute of Public Policy (The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, Sept 2006).

Henton, Douglas, John Melville, and Kim Walesh. "Civic Revolutionaries: Igniting the Passion for Change in America's Communities." *Greater Philadelphia Regional Review*, Winter 2003-2004: 5-7.

Katz, Bruce. "The new localism: How cities and metropolitan areas triumph in the age of Trump." Speech presented at the Texas Association of Urban Counties Annual Education Conference, Austin, Texas, Jan 18, 2017.

Katz, Bruce, and Jennifer Bradley. *The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros Are Fixing Our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013.

Katz, Bruce, and Jeremy Nowak, *The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017.

Kellerman, Barbara. "Cut Off at the Pass: The Limits of Leadership in the 21st Century." Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, Aug 2012): 1-11.

Scheffet, Donna Rae. "Community Leadership: What Does it Take to See Results?" *Journal of Leadership Education*, 6:1 (Winter 2007): 175-190.

¹ Ed Leibowitz, "Can the New 6th Street Viaduct Help Transform L.A.?" *Los Angeles Magazine*, CityThink Blog, Jan 8, 2016. <http://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/can-the-new-6th-street-viaduct-help-transform-la/> (accessed Apr 4, 2017). See also Andrea Thabet, "The Impermanence of LA's Built Environment?" *RemakingLA Blog*, Jan 29, 2016. <https://remakingla.com/2016/01/29/the-impermanence-of-las-built-environment/>.

² Barbara Kellerman, "Cut Off at the Pass: The Limits of Leadership in the 21st Century" (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, August 2012), 6.

³ Douglas V. Easterling and Judith L. Millesen, "Diversifying Civic Leadership: What It Takes to Move from 'New Faces' to Adaptive Problem Solving," *National Civic Review* (Summer 2012), 20.

⁴ Royce Hanson, Hal Wolman, David Connolly, and Katherine Pearson, "Corporate Citizenship and Urban Problem Solving: The Changing Civic Role of Business Leaders in American Cities," The George Washington Institute of Public Policy (The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, Sept 2006), 12.

⁵ See, for example, Jack Shakely, "Los Angeles: Drawn by Committee" (*Los Angeles Review of Books*, Sept 23, 2012), <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/los-angeles-drawn-by-committee/> (accessed Oct 9, 2017).

⁶ Easterling and Millesen, "Diversifying Civic Leadership," 20.

⁷ Some scholars argue that a return to local, CEO-led leadership is critically needed to address economic concerns. One notes that "urban leadership and problem solving require both an understanding of the corporate landscape of city and region and continued outreach, negotiation, and crafting of tailored alliances with the changing cast of corporate and independent-sector chieftains in order to govern successfully." Another perspective on civic leadership—one considered somewhat outdated—is the global approach, meaning that "cities are

heavily constrained by local and regional economic competition” and must focus on stimulating economic growth, rather than be constrained by “democratic accountability and transparent decision making.” But critics of this approach argue that this is an erroneous perspective that “overstates the constraints within which political leaders actually operate,” and that “multinational companies are not necessarily crucial to the economic success of a city.” In fact, many cities have learned that multinational corporations “are, at root, unconcerned about the fortunes of particular places.” Hanson, et al., “Corporate Citizenship and Urban Problem Solving,” 30; Robin Hambleton, “Civic Leadership for Auckland: An International Perspective,” *Part II of Report of the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance* (Auckland Governance Research Papers, Volume 4, March 2009), 524.

⁸ David D. Chrislip and Ed O’Malley, *For the Common Good: Redefining Civic Leadership* (Wichita, Kansas: KLC Press, 2013), 20.

⁹ Hambleton, “Civic Leadership for Auckland,” 523.

¹⁰ Hambleton, “Civic Leadership for Auckland,” 517.

¹¹ Most prevalent contemporary studies of public leadership typically focus on business leadership models, with an emphasis on people operating within vertical organizations marked by hierarchical structures. Although this literature comes from a range of disciplines and provides context for understanding shifts in leadership theory, such studies are insufficient models for mobilizing leadership in cities and regions because they typically focus on the leaders themselves, rather than the process of leadership. Further, they lack contemporary understanding of the complex challenges facing cities on multiple levels. See Andrew Beer and Terry Clower, “Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions,” *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 1:1 (2014), 10.

¹² Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor, *Equity, Growth, and Community: What the Nation Can Learn from America’s Metro Areas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2015), 158-160.

¹³ Hambleton, “Civic Leadership for Auckland,” 539.

¹⁴ Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Stanley S. Litow, Working Paper: “Informed and Interconnected: A Manifesto for Smarter Cities” (Harvard Business School, 2009), 4-5, 12. In Detroit, for example, weak mayors and government officials are often blamed for that city’s lingering economic depression. Rick Cohen, “A City in Remission: Can the ‘Grand Bargain’ Revive Detroit?” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, Jan 6, 2016.

¹⁵ Hambleton, “Civic Leadership for Auckland,” 534.

¹⁶ Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak, *The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2017), 245.

¹⁷ Benner and Pastor, 215-220; see also Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor, *Just Growth: Inclusion and Prosperity in America’s Metropolitan Regions* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹⁸ Katz and Nowak, 229.

¹⁹ By creating “public processes that complement and work in parallel with the formal institutions of governance,” and by cutting “across the divisiveness of interest group politics,” civic engagement can be highly effective in constructively addressing civic problems. In terms of leadership, there are four important roles that “must be played in these public processes.” First, stakeholders must hold implementing organizations accountable. Second, communities need experts to “provide stakeholders with the information necessary for making good decisions,” but these experts “do not drive collaborative processes.” Third, those with “extensive knowledge of collaboration help design and facilitate these initiatives.” And fourth, a small number of “strong, facilitative leaders in the stakeholder group convene, catalyze and sustain these collaborative efforts.” Such leaders need to “get people to the table and keep them there”; must bury personal desires for a specific solution, instead trusting “the work of the group”; and must “encourage participation.” This leadership “as peer rather than as superior,” however, is not “leadership without vision. Rather it is leadership with a vision of a different kind ... a more deeply democratic and constructive way of making public decisions.” Douglas Henton, John Melville, and Kim Walesh, “Civic Revolutionaries: Igniting the Passion for Change in America’s Communities” (Greater Philadelphia Regional Review, Winter 2003-2004), 6.

²⁰ Benner and Pastor, 202-214.

²¹ Katz and Nowak, 234.

²² The best history of Los Angeles incarceration throughout multiple historical periods is Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965* (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

²³ See Chad Pearson, *Reform or Repression: Organizing America’s Anti-Union Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

²⁴ Raphael J. Sonenshein, “Coalition Building in Los Angeles: The Bradley Years and Beyond,” in Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2001), 453.

²⁵ “The interests of those who are on the bottom of the income distribution or racial hierarchy only get addressed when there are strong social movements that can articulate needs and strategize to gain decision-making power. But the workings of an epistemic community hold out the possibility that those demands and strategies to address disadvantage will be a little less contentious, a little more successful, and a little more effective over time.” Benner and Pastor, 237.

PART TWO

A Century of Civic Leadership in Los Angeles: Case Studies

As the definition and power of civic leadership evolves in greater Southern California and around the nation and world, it is useful to contemplate key moments in the past for insight and perspective. There are new ideas under the sun, but there are also historical antecedents of roads taken and not taken. The past offers more than examples of this or that triumph or failure of civic engagement; the past—recent and multiple generations back—is where today’s problems and challenges arose and emerged. Tackling them demands broad-minded awareness of context and origin. In the case studies that follow, we explore five key periods of civic leadership across the twentieth century. Viewed not as episodes but as eras, these case studies arise with the coming of the 20th century. It was across the new century that Angeleno officials and citizens believed their metropolitan upstart would become the City of the Future. That faith prompted a release of civic energy encapsulated by the reforms (and mistakes) of the Progressive Era. Each successive era built upon the strides, both forward and back, made by previous leaders and movements; excavating these periods, so different and so alike, provides invaluable context as we move deeper into our century of promise.

*1900s-1930s: The Progressive Era
and Urban Greenspace*

*1930s-1950s: Roots of Racial Politics
and Grassroots Activism*

*1940s-1960s: Remaking Downtown Los Angeles
through Urban Renewal Policy*

*1960s-1980s: Environmental Activism
Across the Metropolis*

*1980s-2000s: The Bradley Coalition and
the Revitalization of Downtown*

1900s-1930s: The Progressive Era and Urban Greenspace

Los Angeles grew at a stunning rate across the boom and bust decades of the late 19th century. As the century turned, Angelenos looked across the coming 1900s as promising metropolitan maturity, even greatness. That exuberance made common cause with the reform juggernaut of the Progressive Era. In imperfect fits and starts, civic leaders in the public and private sectors worked together and in isolation to bring about significant change in water and power infrastructure, electoral and democratic mechanisms, early urban planning blueprints and rationalizations, transit systems, and the like. It is here, in this period from the very end of the 19th century through the coming of the Great Depression, that we see most clearly the promises and pitfalls of civic leadership. It is to this historical period that we find the early templates and models (and warnings and mistakes) of civic engagement, leadership, and legacy-making.

As the 20th century dawned, civic leadership in Los Angeles was widely influenced by the ideologies of the Progressive Era, a transatlantic movement that embraced a variety of scientific solutions and political reforms to solve societal problems. Progressive Era reformers drew on the American Park Movement and the City Beautiful and Municipal Housekeeping movements, all of which appeared in the public lexicon during the late 19th century. Each of these movements used the language of uplift and embraced government intervention as a method to address the economic, social, and civic problems brought on by rapid urbanization and industrialization. Critics and historians of the Progressive Era have argued that many reformers pursued civic ideals that whitewashed racial, ethnic, class, and gender discord, and have shown how underlying racism, rather than the egalitarian or inclusionary ideals they claimed to uphold, drove some reformers. However flawed, Progressive Era civic leadership in Los Angeles laid a foundation for the city's early commitment to greenspaces and set a precedent for public-private partnerships, community activism, and political reform that would profoundly shape the region's built environment and civic infrastructure. This period also profoundly influenced

The one thing needed is something which Los Angeles is said to have...That spirit which looks ahead, which grasps big ideas, which is ready to pull together for the city's good.¹

- Charles Mulford Robinson, November 1907

urban planning and politics in the state of California for the next century.

Los Angeles progressive reformers initially focused on public parks as a vital civic cause, influenced by the tenets of the American Park Movement (APM). The APM promoted the belief that the creation of greenspace could combat social ills—disease, poverty, and crime in particular—as these “evils were ... caused by the negative impact of urban surroundings.”² Because park advocates believed society was “a product of its environment ... beautifully designed parks would create the good society” by inspiring good citizenship and civic pride.³ While the need for public greenspace found traction in eastern cities, establishing such spaces in uncrowded and less developed western cities was more difficult. The City of Los Angeles had little need for public parks due to the ready availability of land.⁴ Its oldest city parks came from direct donation, such as Griffith Park (1896), or through

default, as with MacArthur Park (1887)—and typically these lands were considered worthless.⁵ By contrast, the City Council founded downtown's Elysian Park (1886), in the hopes it would enhance the “attractiveness of the city” for long-term investment and increase the land value of the park's immediate surroundings, which it achieved.⁶ A Department of Parks was authorized in 1889 under the city's first Freeholder Charter, which oversaw all parks and public land authorized by the

original Spanish land grant for “perpetual use of the community.” The grant included present-day Pershing Square, downtown's Plaza, and Elysian Park.⁷

Initially, no planned or supervised recreation occurred in L.A.'s public parks, but organized recreation would soon become vastly influential in shaping the city's approach to public green spaces.⁸ At the turn of the 20th century, a national playground movement emerged out of a shift in the APM, which emphasized specialized features like play equipment and picnic areas, with a specific focus on the welfare of children. Playground advocates believed organized community and recreational spaces would help prevent juvenile delinquency, create better citizens, and combat the evils of commercial amusements such as dance halls and unorganized street play by providing more constructive leisure activities.⁹

Los Angeles civic leaders were among the nation's pioneers in playground creation. Spurred by local clubwomen, they established the nation's first municipal Playground Department in 1904, which focused on the whole family and provided space for both sport activities and indoor activities.¹⁰ Between 1905 and 1911, the department created a number of playgrounds in densely populated areas. Organized recreation came later, after 1915, when the Playground Department began to develop indoor spaces that offered game rooms, gymnasiums, performance spaces, and food and shower facilities.¹¹ Like its public parks, L.A.'s first playgrounds were established on land "no one else wanted." By the mid-1920s, the Playground and Recreation Department's mandate "had become breathtakingly wide: how to furnish people of modest means with activities that would improve the quality of their lives."¹² Recreation spaces later expanded to include municipal golf courses and beaches.¹³ It is worth noting, however, that there was often a disconnect between the egalitarian ideals spouted by these movements regarding recreation access for "the people" and the reality of often exclusionary policies and practices, and municipal codes that were influenced by race, class, and ethnicity. Still, the promise, if not the execution, of democratic access to public spaces and associated practices of civic life and public engagement did set the precedent for later inclusion and diversification. Moreover, local progressive activists did in fact count among their ranks a number of important voices of inclusion and metropolitan equal access.

The progressive reformers continued to emphasize the links between public parks, wholesome recreation, and a better society well into the 20th century, drawing on the Municipal Housekeeping and City Beautiful movements. Municipal Housekeeping posited that because the domestic realm was "naturally" a woman's purview, women had a civic duty to improve the "domestic" aspects of city life. Lobbying local governments for public sanitation or health-care facilities are two examples.¹⁴ In Los Angeles, a growing number of activist women pushed civic leaders—prominent businessmen, politicians, newspaper owners, and the like—to solve urban problems. For example, in the enclave of Hollywood (annexed 1910), local clubwomen joined with civic leaders to address the neighborhood's problems in a holistic fashion, and to encourage a sense of community and civic unity in a metropolis largely populated by migrants. The establishment of the Hollywood Bowl is one example of how these ideologies converged in a publicly supported cultural space that celebrated uplifting and wholesome recreation in the form of democratic access to music

in an informal, outdoor setting.¹⁵ In many cases, neighborhood organizations were created out of a strong sense of place, and with a desire to maintain a sense of community and the need to strengthen local institutions and businesses.

The City Beautiful movement, an outgrowth of the APM, also influenced civic initiatives in early-20th-century Los Angeles. City Beautiful touted "civic beauty as an antidote to urban malaise," and combined the "new professions of architecture and engineering" with the concept of urban planning. Such keen attention to urban aesthetics originated with Chicago's 1893 World's Fair in the form of the White City. City Beautiful programs flourished throughout American cities in the early 20th century, most notably in Washington, D.C., and were characterized by ordered and efficient boulevards, scenic drives, centralized greenspaces, and artistic design for urban structures.¹⁶

Los Angeles once again led the nation by establishing one of the nation's first public agencies devoted to "urban aesthetics," in the form of the Municipal Art Commission (MAC).¹⁷ Formed in 1903, the MAC was inspired by progressive ideologies and styled as a private citizens committee; however, the mayor of the City of Los Angeles appointed the five-member commission based on a list of names suggested by women's clubs and civic organizations. The commission was "charged with the duty of making the city more attractive and beautiful in every way ... [with] special attention... to architecture in public buildings."¹⁸ The group defined their mission broadly by including the artistic design of all urban structures within the city—buildings, bridges, fountains, fences, sculptures, and even lampposts—under their purview. As historian Sarah Schrank describes it, "progressive reform, civic identity, art, and boosterism merged" within the commission. Unpaid commissioners frequently included members of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, local architects, cultural leaders, society-page types, and, at times, a few "Hollywood heavyweights" like Sid Grauman of movie-palace fame.¹⁹ In 1911, the commission received official municipal authority when voters approved a charter amendment institutionalizing the Commission, thereby granting it a powerful voice in planning policy. Schrank notes that its members "saw themselves as participating in a control mechanism over the entire infrastructure of the city."²⁰

In its first few decades, MAC activities represented a "young city's grand ambition to establish itself."²¹ The commission's pursuit of "highbrow ideals" made it a clear vehicle of the upper- and middle-class whites and allowed a handful of civic elites to exert a



In the mid-1920s, philanthropist Aline Barnsdall gave her Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home and surrounding acreage to the city of Los Angeles as a park and art center. The gift exemplified Progressive Era interests in uplift by way of cultural expression, recreation in park space, and inspiration drawn from architecture and design. Courtesy Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

disproportionate measure of control over architecture, design, and art in Los Angeles.²² Commissioners were equally concerned with impressing tourists and inspiring “civic pride” among residents. Early in the history of MAC, local City Beautiful advocate, Congregationalist pastor, and settlement house founder Dana Bartlett published a treatise on how comprehensive planning could utilize the city’s natural assets to improve quality of life and uplift residents.²³ Bartlett persuaded MAC commissioners to hire nationally known city planner Charles Mulford Robinson to create a City Beautiful plan for Los Angeles. Robinson’s study, “The City Beautiful” (1909), offered a complex plan that proposed traffic solutions, emphasized cleanliness and order, and suggested the creation and protection of public greenspaces and beaches. The commission heeded the aesthetic ideas but ignored the suggestions regarding public greenspaces.²⁴ Other citizen groups in the 1910s, such as the Los Angeles City Planning Association, also advocated for large-scale urban planning, and were responsible for various studies. For example, traffic and transit problems resulted in a 1924 study entitled *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles*. The report would influence planning and development in Los Angeles for years to come.²⁵

The most successful and enduring case of civic leadership in Los Angeles is the combined work and legacy of Dr. John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes, whose reform activities culminated in the establishment of the Haynes Foundation in 1926. The foundation, dedicated to funding research and policy investigations aimed at civic betterment, is the oldest in Los Angeles. Haynes and wife Dora settled in Los Angeles in 1887, and they immediately immersed themselves in local professional, community, and civic organizations. Dr. Haynes’s thriving medical practice put him in regular contact with powerful Angelenos such as *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis. The couple fashioned themselves as Christian social democrats and embraced progressive-movement causes that often centered on civic issues and social reform. Haynes’s activities extended to Chamber of Commerce membership, but his real passion was structural political reform. He joined the League for Better City Government to fight political corruption, and worked tirelessly for the adoption, and later protection, of direct legislation measures—the initiative, the referendum, and the recall—first in Los Angeles city government, and later in the state of California.²⁶ Haynes’s leadership in government reform, direct democracy, and the campaign for public ownership of utilities would irrevocably shape politics in

Los Angeles and California over the following century.²⁷ Haynes later became a University of California regent, and he would continue to fund and support progressive causes, publications, and politicians throughout his life. Between 1911 and 1937, Haynes was one of the most powerful political figures in Los Angeles.²⁸

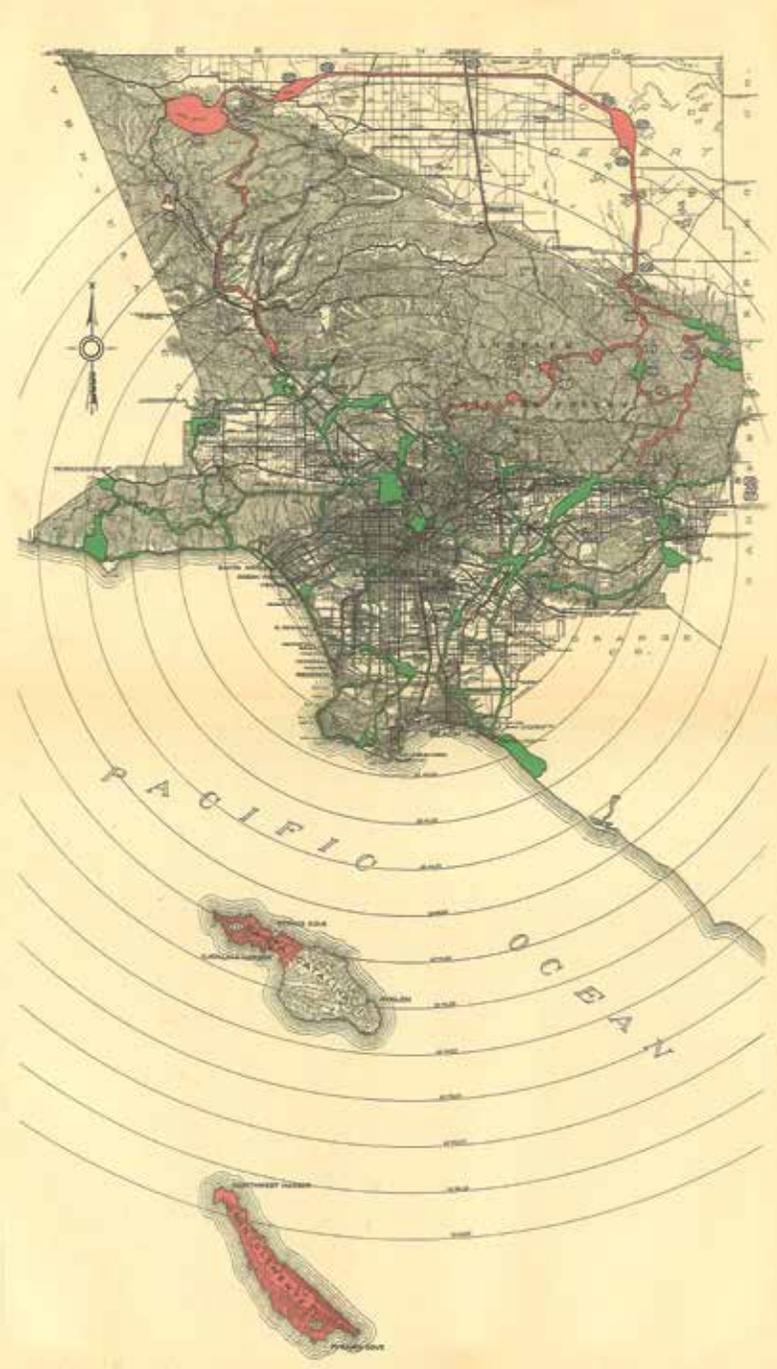
Dora Haynes supported her husband's reform work and participated in progressive reform through her own civic activities. She was a founding member of the Friday Morning Club, "a discussion and service organization that gradually became involved in civic affairs," and she worked with her own network of well-connected women to support progressive causes. By 1909, Dora had become "one of the city's most prominent suffragists," and she relied on her husband to garner support for suffrage from male reformers in California.²⁹

John and Dora Haynes created the Haynes Foundation to assure that their fortune would continue to support progressive causes long after their deaths.³⁰ They established the Haynes Foundation in 1926, styled after the Sage and Rockefeller foundations, with the stated purpose of "promoting the well-being of mankind." As the oldest private foundation in the city, the Haynes Foundation would help shape Los Angeles and California over the next century—as it continues to do—by funding urban studies related to a number of social and civic concerns, including housing, transportation, minority studies, education, local government, and public safety. Overall, the goal has been to discover the root cause of problems and recommend solutions. Its funding and studies focus solely on metropolitan Los Angeles, and many Haynes-funded studies became key resources for later urban planning and policy.³¹

While Angelenos proved to be among the nation's leaders in creating progressive agencies and policies aimed at achieving a "public good," and achieved tangible successes, there were also moments when civic leaders failed to implement innovative, far-reaching plans that might have fulfilled their own self-proclaimed directives. Despite an early commitment to the development of public parks, playgrounds, and recreation spaces, politicians and civic officials demonstrated shortsightedness and ambivalence toward the need for stronger municipal park and recreation policies by routinely ignoring studies that recommended such strides.³² One lost opportunity occurred in the late 1920s under the aegis of the L.A. Chamber of Commerce, which commissioned a comprehensive plan for controlling the region's growth and development. In 1927, the Chamber hired two prestigious firms—Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, and Harland

Bartholomew and Associates of St. Louis—to study and make recommendations for controlling the city's growth and development.³³ Chamber leaders recognized that Los Angeles County was woefully lacking in adequate playground and park space, especially compared to other metropolitan areas. Even more important was the concern that playgrounds and greenspaces were "a means to improve health, reduce delinquency, and promote citizenship" in Los Angeles.³⁴ The Olmsted-Bartholomew report, *Parks, Playgrounds and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region* (1930), consisted of three central components: a survey of the county's public parks, recreational spaces, and beaches; recommendations to remedy the lack of public recreational spaces; and a proposal for implementation including infrastructure, policy, finance, and legislative strategies. According to the report, the biggest danger to open public space in Southern California was a growing population that increasingly gobbled up property for private residential or industrial use. The report recommended the creation of "a system of neighborhood playgrounds and local parks linked to regional 'reservations' along the Pacific coastline and interspersed across the surrounding foothills, mountains, and desert."³⁵ Despite the report's farsighted and comprehensive recommendations, the Chamber deliberately suppressed its conclusions and the very report it had paid for because the recommended fiscal and governance mechanisms proposed by Olmsted Brothers would have cut into the Chamber's power and profile. If ever there was a road not taken in greenspace planning in Los Angeles, this is it—and contemporary greenspace advocacy, from the Los Angeles River to the Rio Hondo River to the San Gabriel River, in many respects is rooted in its vision.³⁶

Ultimately, civic leadership during this era was driven by the desire to address urban problems brought on by rapid growth, and to plan for the future of Los Angeles. These examples show that Los Angeles has a long history of private citizens acting with public authority through government-appointed positions with minimal oversight, and through private foundations and community organizations, in order to exert control over a broad swath of the metropolis. Typically, these civic leaders were white, Christian, and middle- to upper-class, and they were businesspeople, professionals (doctors, attorneys), entertainment leaders, and clubwomen. Many of these leaders genuinely believed deeply in civic engagement and the creation of a "good society," and they were willing to innovate and experiment in the pursuit of solutions for social and urban problems. But they were also limited by a narrow, somewhat Victorian idea of what constituted a public good, without considering the wants and



In 1927, a consortium of private individuals, in league with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, hired the distinguished landscape design firm, Olmsted Brothers, to create a greenspace plan for all of Los Angeles County. The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan proposed a remarkable vision for unified greenspace and park networks across much of Southern California, protecting vast urban and suburban space, including beaches and deserts, ahead of future development. But the Chamber of Commerce balked at ceding financial and oversight leadership to new and super-jurisdictional bodies which would oversee the vast complex of open space—and suppressed the plan. The end result was a missed opportunity of profound consequence. This map indicates, in red (protected open space) and green (parks or parkways), the environmental network and “necklace” the Olmsted firm envisioned. Courtesy Greg Hise and William Deverell.

needs of the region’s less wealthy, nonwhite residents. Again, it is imperative to recognize Progressives falling short of racially egalitarian visions or policies—and to note that this blind spot appears as often as not to have been deliberate. Progressivism in Los Angeles has all the internal tensions and inconsistencies that it does in every other part of the United States; uplift and reform and optimism could seemingly nestle comfortably against or alongside racism and commitment to social hierarchies carved from class, gender, and ethnic identities and antagonisms.

Labor politics provide a case study within this case study era. Bound by class and other allegiances to the open shop, Los Angeles employers and Progressive Era tinkers with the region’s political economy boxed labor out of equitable roles in the workplace and beyond. Economic inequality in the early 20th century deepened under civic leaders dedicated equally to industrial growth and the open shop. Such antipathies made Los Angeles one of the most virulent anti-labor capitals in not only the American West but the entire nation at precisely the same moment that “reform” had become a watchword and a mantra. Thus pressure-cooked in this era of Big Capital versus Big Labor, the result was sadly predictable. Violent clashes had a “to the barricades” sensibility about them, and union saboteurs blew up the *Los Angeles Times* building in October 1910. It would not be until the Popular Front years of World War II that labor would gain much voice in Los Angeles, and even through the Cold War that voice would be muted by antagonism from employers and the political structure.

Unlike labor activists, African American youth during this period built a foundation for civil rights activism that would breathe new life into the local NAACP and give rise to a black community intent on challenging white supremacy, restrictive housing covenants, and police brutality. The Los Angeles branch of the NAACP was founded in 1914 and immediately set out to address racial discrimination in the region, particularly in the wake of substantial African American migration and massive demographic changes. The organization had the support of several wealthy whites, including member John Randolph Haynes.³⁷ But by the early 1920s, frustration with older leaders led black students from USC and UCLA to establish a Junior Branch in 1925 to aggressively counter assumptions of black inferiority. The Junior Branch “identified themselves as ‘New Negroes’...educated, assertive proponent[s] of black freedom and black progress.”³⁸ Energized by the New Negro Arts Movement, black youth leaders ushered in a painful period of turmoil that signified a shift in generational leadership and built the foundation for a “rising civil rights community” centered on the

vibrant black neighborhood along Central Avenue.³⁹ Working in tandem with—and sometimes in opposition to—the NAACP’s efforts to counter racial segregation and inequality was pioneering civil rights activist Charlotta Bass, one of the most influential African Americans in the nation. Bass was owner, editor, and publisher of the *California Eagle*, the largest African American newspaper on the West Coast. Through the *Eagle*, Bass sought to inform and inspire the black community and advocate for racial equality and social justice. The paper would contribute to the growth of multiracial politics and labor activism in the 1940s and ’50s by advocating for black, Asian, and Mexican American civil rights.⁴⁰

But contradictions—reform and the repression of reform—remain one of the key takeaways of this critical historical period. We cannot look past the fact that this period of Progressive Era policies and urban planning in Los Angeles set an important precedent for democratic access to greenspace by enshrining such language in public policy through the city charter, and in the missions of both the parks and the recreation departments. By the 1930s, Los Angeles had a solid foundation on which to build a broader and more inclusive parks and recreation program later in the century. But between the 1930s and the 1960s, Los Angeles civic leaders—elected and nonelected—passed up a number of opportunities to improve parks and recreation facilities. Environmental activists would draw on this foundation by arguing that city officials violated the city charter by repeatedly appropriating public parks for nonpark use. Activists called out public officials for failing to create sufficient greenspace to keep up with the explosive growth of the region, especially in neighborhoods of color and poor neighborhoods where public recreation spaces were needed most. White civic leaders during this period largely maintained a tight rein over the economic and political machines that ran the city, either ignoring or reinforcing essential inequalities by advancing a market-driven approach to land use and labor. Inequality and lack of access shaped the actions of underrepresented communities and drove the activism of future civic leaders Edward Roybal and Tom Bradley.

What stands out here is the long-standing history of private citizens identifying civic problems or needs, and seeking solutions to what they saw as community priorities. Angelenos have long taken a regional approach to community problem solving, and relied on collaboration and innovation in the absence of structural mechanisms to pursue civic solutions. This combination of charismatic, institutional, and community leadership set a precedent for civic leadership in Los Angeles during the 20th century.

Further Reading:

“An Overview: 100 Years of Recreation and Parks.” City of Los Angeles, Recreation and Parks Department, 1988.

“The Boom Interview: Christopher Hawthorne.” *Boom California*, May 10, 2016.

Diri, Phyl. “Where the Brake Fern and Willow Find a Home.” *California History* 62:3 (Fall 1983): 162-168.

Flamming, Douglas. *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Hise, Greg, and William Deverell, eds. *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Jao, Carren. “The Commission that Shaped the Los Angeles River’s Bridges.” KCET.com (Nov 12, 2015). <https://www.kcet.org/confluence/the-commission-that-shaped-the-los-angeles-rivers-bridges>.

Kurashige, Scott. *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of a Multiethnic Los Angeles*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Lytle Hernández, Kelly. *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965*. Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Pulido, Laura, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng. *A People’s Guide to Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Reitan, Meredith Drake. “Beauty Controlled: The Persistence of City Beautiful Planning in Los Angeles.” *Journal of Planning History* 13:4 (2013): 296-321.

Robinson, Charles Mulford. *Los Angeles, California: The City Beautiful*. Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1909.

Sides, Josh. *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Sitton, Tom. *The Haynes Foundation and Urban Reform Philanthropy in Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: The Historical Society of Southern California, 1999.

Sitton, Tom, and William Deverell, eds. *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Young, Terence. "The American Park Movement," in *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850–1930*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004: 1-30.

¹ Charles Mulford Robinson, "The City Beautiful," in: *Report of the Municipal Art Commission for the City of Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles: William J. Porter, 1909), Department of Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.

² Terence Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2-4.

³ *Ibid.*, 17. This largely Victorian idea of creating publicly accessible parks was best articulated by two pioneers of American landscape design, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Known most famously for their design of New York's Central Park (1858), Olmsted and Vaux believed wholeheartedly in the idea of public greenspace as a democratizing force in American life.

⁴ Phyl Diri, "Where the Brake Fern and Willow Find a Home," *California History* 62:3 (Fall 1983): 162-164. The relatively small population also contributed to a lack of interest in publicly owned park space.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 164; Michael Eberts, "Recreation and Parks," in: *The Development of Los Angeles City Government* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles City Historical Society, 2007), 589-600. Eberts also discusses the founding of Pershing Square, Eastlake (Lincoln) Park, Elysian Park, Echo Park, Exposition Park, Sepulveda Dam Recreation Area, and Hansen Dam.

⁶ Diri, "Where the Brake Fern," 163-164, 166-168. Diri notes that L.A.'s economy at the time was in a cycle of bust and land values had dropped significantly. Mayor Cameron Erskine Thom issued the Elysian Park enabling ordinance in 1883. Several upper-class neighborhoods soon developed nearby, including Angelino Heights (1887) and Echo Park (1891).

⁷ Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government* (Los Angeles: League of Women Voters of Los Angeles, 2006), 87.

⁸ "An Overview: 100 Years of Recreation and Parks" (City of Los Angeles, Recreation and Parks Department, 1988), 9.

⁹ Eberts, "Recreation and Parks," 600-604; Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks*, 4-7, 10-11. Quotation from Eberts, 602. Playground proponents took their goals and mission seriously as an important foundation on which to build moral and civic virtue. The Playground Association of America (later the National Recreation Association), founded in 1906, emphasized the "relationship between organized play, health, character, and democracy." On the Playground Association of America, see Linnea M. Anderson, "'The Playground of Today Is the Republic of Tomorrow': Social Reform and Organized Recreation in the USA, 1890-1930s," *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education* (2006), www.infed.org/playwork/organized_recreation_and_playwork_1890-1930s.htm (accessed Jun 2013). For more on L.A.'s Playground Department, see "An Overview."

¹⁰ "An Overview."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹² Eberts, "Recreation and Parks," 600-604. On the founding and structure of the city's Recreation Department, see Sonenshein, *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government*, 87-88.

¹³ "An Overview."

¹⁴ Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 5, 119.

¹⁵ Andrea Thabet, *Culture as Urban Renewal: Postwar Los Angeles and the Remaking of Public Space* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013).

¹⁶ Sarah Schrank, *Art and the City: Civic Imagination and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12, 28-29.

¹⁸ "Municipal Art; Mayor Appoints Commission," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 24, 1903. The civic organizations consulted included two of the city's most prominent women's clubs, the Ebell Club and the Friday Morning Club.

¹⁹ Schrank, *Art and the City*, 28-29. The commission later expanded to eight members.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

²¹ Carren Jao, "The Commission that Shaped the Los Angeles River's Bridges," KCET.com (Nov 12, 2015), <https://www.kcet.org/confluence/the-commission-that-shaped-the-los-angeles-rivers-bridges>; "City Bridges Lack Artistic Feature," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 6, 1904.

²² Schrank, *Art and the City*, 60.

²³ Dana Bartlett, *The Better City: A Sociological Study of a Modern City* (Los Angeles: Neuner Press, 1907). For more on Bartlett and City Beautiful, see Greg Hise and William Deverell, eds., *Eden by Design: The 1930 Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 12-20; Schrank, *Art and the City*, 28.

²⁴ Robinson, "The City Beautiful"; Schrank, *Art and the City*, 28.

²⁵ Hise and Deverell, *Eden by Design*, 19-22. Two planning firms, the Olmsted Brothers and Harland Bartholomew and Associates, created the traffic and transit study.

²⁶ Tom Sitton, *The Haynes Foundation and Urban Reform Philanthropy in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Historical Society of Southern California, 1999), 22-28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-33. Haynes served on the civil service commission, sat several city charter revision committees, and worked to end secret political factions that were believed to control and corrupt government. Haynes helped to spread direct legislation nationally, through articles and speeches. See Sitton, *The Haynes Foundation*, 28, 30-31. His campaigns eventually made him an enemy of the conservative *Los Angeles Times*, which by 1905 began to attack Haynes and his progressive causes.

²⁸ Sitton, *The Haynes Foundation*, 34-36.

²⁹ Ibid., 29-30. Dora was also a founder of the League of Women Voters and worked diligently for women's political empowerment until her death (34-35, 63).

³⁰ Ibid., 37.

³¹ Ibid., 42-43. See also <http://www.insidephilanthropy.com/fundraising-los-angeles-grants/john-randolph-haynes-and-dora-haynes-foundation-los-angeles.html>. The foundation's original mission to study the cause of problems and recommend solutions has remained constant, although the preferred causes and method of doing so have changed over the years, especially in the first 15 years of operation as the foundation adjusted to the death of its founders. In-house research was favored initially in the style of a think tank, but the foundation eventually shifted its resources to fund outside studies.

³² John Anson Ford, *Statement* (Finance Committee Hearing: Los Angeles City Council, Dec 20, 1965), Council File 122183, Los Angeles City Archives; Diri, "Where the Brake Fern," 166-167.

³³ Hise and Deverell, *Eden by Design*, 1-8.

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Ibid., 1.

³⁶ Ibid., 1-8. The total cost for the three-year survey and final report came to approximately \$80,000, paid out of the Chamber of Commerce's Citizens Committee coffers. Although the report's recommendations were ignored, various regional planners utilized its comprehensive data and maps over the next 20 to 30 years for smaller-scale projects in Los Angeles. The editors call the report an "authoritative study" that recommends the creation of "a system of neighborhood playgrounds and local parks linked to regional 'reservations' along the Pacific coastline and interspersed across the surrounding foothills, mountains, and desert" (1). In hindsight, the city was likely better able to weather the Great Depression financially having not taken on a comprehensive planning program of this magnitude. Still, many L.A. urban historians lament what might have been for the city had it adopted the major tenets of the report. See, for example, Christopher Hawthorne, "Reading L.A.: The Olmsted Brothers Plan and What Might Have Been," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 11, 2011, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/11/reading-la-the-olmsted-bartholomew-plan-and-what-might-have-been.html> (accessed Oct 7, 2017), and the 2013 "Emerald Necklace Forest to Ocean Expanded Vision Plan," <http://www.amigosdelosrios.org/the-emerald-necklace-vision-plan/> (accessed Oct 7, 2017).

³⁷ Douglas Flammig, "The Star of Ethiopia and the NAACP: Pageantry, Politics, and the Los Angeles African American Community," in Tom Sitton and William Deverell, eds., *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 153. Haynes and his wife, Dora Haynes, continue to be figures worthy of close study across a century of civic reform in Los Angeles. The foundation they started in the 1920s, the oldest in Los Angeles and very active to this day, has been both unique and vastly influential because it looked for ways to "analyze the root causes" of socio-economic and civic problems through "scientific philanthropy," rather than creating a charitable organization to address merely the symptoms of problems.

³⁸ Flammig, "The Star of Ethiopia and the NAACP," 146-147.

³⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁰ "Charlotta Bass and the *California Eagle*," Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101128125840/http://socallib.org/bass/index.html> (accessed Oct 22, 2017); Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng, *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 131-132.

1930s–1950s: Roots of Racial Politics and Grassroots Activism

Beginning in the 1930s, a series of events contributed to the politicization of Chicano youth in Los Angeles. These events laid the groundwork for a number of political and social activist careers, including those of Edward Roybal, Carey McWilliams, Alice McGrath, and Cesar Chavez, as well as the establishment of influential community organizations dedicated to the welfare of California's broader Latino community. The connections made within L.A.'s own multiracial communities, especially in neighborhoods like Boyle Heights, would also lay the groundwork for the Bradley Coalition and provide opportunities for Chicano activism. These examples of civic leadership represent efforts to enact change, both within the political and judicial system and outside of it through community organizing. The collective responses to these incidents would help galvanize a generation to activism, culminating in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and '70s.

In 1942, 21 Mexican American youths and one non-Mexican were tried for a well-publicized murder at the Sleepy Lagoon during what might be called a teenage brawl. The murder and subsequent trial of 22 youths would galvanize a generation of activists. Essentially, the young men were tried under inhumane conditions without regard for defendant rights, and with little evidence and a biased judge. A young political activist named Alice McGrath began volunteering for the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee (SLDC), a grassroots organization that worked tirelessly to appeal the convictions. McGrath called the trial “one of the most racist trials in the history of jurisprudence.”¹ She would later become the SLDC's executive secretary, responsible for raising public awareness, corresponding with the defendants, and assisting in the effort to overturn the convictions on appeal. The SLDC won, the convictions were overturned in October 1944, and the case was left unsolved. The Sleepy Lagoon incident, as well as the Zoot Suit riots in June 1943 between white servicemen on leave and primarily Mexican youth, served to politicize L.A.'s Chicano youth.

McGrath's charismatic leadership and her pivotal role in “one of California's landmark civil rights cases” would launch a lifelong dedication to economic, legal, and social justice causes.² She volunteered for an organization in Ventura that provided pro bono legal counsel to the poor, taught self-defense classes for women, and organized countless trips to war-torn Nicaragua as a guide for “political tourists.” McGrath also planned focused tours for specific groups—for

example, taking “a group of doctors ... to hospitals and clinics ... [or] academics to cultural events [and] schools.” Her efforts aimed to address deficiencies in education and health care.³

Mexican American politician Edward Roybal was another charismatic civic leader who would influence a generation and beyond, both locally and nationally. Roybal was known as a champion of the underprivileged and the elderly, an activist dedicated to civil rights, social justice, and political empowerment. One colleague called him a “quiet groundbreaker.”⁴ Roybal grew up in Boyle Heights, one of L.A.'s most ethnically diverse neighborhoods, in the first half of the 20th century. Boyle Heights residents included large numbers of Jewish and Mexican immigrants. Roybal began honing his leadership skills during his time at Roosevelt High School, in his military service during World War II, and later in his work as a public health administrator, where he created policies that would benefit low-income residents with little access to health care. In 1946, at the urging of local businessmen and community activists, Roybal ran for Los Angeles City Council in the 9th District, which included Boyle Heights, Bunker Hill, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo. He was seen as an “ideal candidate to represent ... a multi-racial, working class coalition that would be more politically inclusive at City Hall.”⁵

While Roybal finished the race in third, his political campaign committee relaunched itself as the Community Service Organization (CSO), styled as a nonpartisan “self-help civic action agency.”⁶ The organization chose Roybal as its first president because of his ongoing community service and his “reliable access to the grassroots community,” positioning him “to become a voice of the voiceless.”⁷ The CSO focused on a number of important community-oriented goals that deeply affected Boyle Heights residents and surrounding neighborhoods, including “job discrimination against minorities ... lack of access to public health care, lack of political accountability for police mistreatment of Mexican American youth, and finally a call to civic action by the community itself.” Other CSO concerns included living conditions, street and road conditions, education and youth programs, civil and human rights violations, citizenship classes, and legislative campaigns for policies that benefited people of color. It was, in other words, a bastion of liberal-left political and community activity that united organized labor, Catholics, Jews, and members of both the Democratic and Progressive parties.⁸ The CSO was significant for a number of reasons, not least because it provided a space for collective action as well as on-the-ground leadership development.



July 1953. The elections of Los Angeles City Councilmembers Edward Roybal (1949) and Rosalind Wiener Wyman (1953) diversified political leadership and brought more liberal views to the Council. Still, they disagreed on key issues, including the balance between anticommunism and civil rights protection for immigrants, as well as the transfer of what had been a Mexican-American neighborhood in Chavez Ravine to the newly arrived Los Angeles Dodgers organization for its new stadium. Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library.

Roybal's work with the CSO paid off both personally and professionally. In 1949, Roybal ran again for City Council in the 9th District with the support of the CSO, which successfully built one of the first multiracial coalitions to elect a minority candidate. His candidacy symbolized postwar Mexican American aspirations, including "the desire to attain the American dream—a stable job, home ownership, access to education, and civic engagement."⁹ The coalition they built together united organized labor with the Catholic Church amidst the multiethnic neighborhoods of the 9th District. Roybal also owed his council victory to the CSO's massively successful grassroots voter registration drive headed by Mexican American activist women (including Roybal's wife Lucille) who became L.A. County deputy registrars. The CSO effectively registered thousands of Mexican American voters—many first-timers—from Boyle Heights and East L.A., helping elect Roybal to City Council. Roybal became the first Latino elected official to serve on the L.A. City Council since 1881, serving 13 years. Roybal also ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor (1954), and pursued a close but unsuccessful run for Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (1958), before resigning his position on the City Council to run for U.S. Congress

in the new 30th Congressional District.¹⁰ The 30th District, which included Boyle Heights, downtown L.A., MacArthur Park, Hollywood, and Hancock Park, was one of the most racially and socio-economically diverse districts in the State of California. Roybal used the same multiracial political coalition to win his 1962 congressional race, with the support of the Democratic Party, including President Kennedy. Roybal served in Congress for 30 years (1963-1993).¹¹

Roybal's political position gave him a platform to further the development of Mexican American political power in California, and once again, Roybal and other California activists blazed a path toward national political power. In the late 1950s, he helped establish the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA, 1960) and became the organization's first president. MAPA's goal was "to become the political voice of Mexican American communities by increasing the amount of elected officials all over California who represented their interests." The organization structured itself as a grassroots coalition builder operating at every level to ensure a Latino voice in California politics. Once again, California proved to be a trailblazer, and other western states followed

suit by creating grassroots networks among Latinos across state lines. The Democratic Party took notice, cultivating a southwest Latino voting bloc that helped John F. Kennedy claim 85 percent of the Mexican American national vote in his path to the White House in 1960. MAPA became a powerful political voice during the Civil Rights Movement and the Chicano political movement, aiding activists like Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers in the fight for unionization. Chavez, in fact, got his start in the CSO working with legendary organizer Fred Ross. Both MAPA and the CSO would remain powerful sources for Latino political empowerment for the next 50 years and beyond, influencing national politics through grassroots voter registration drives and leadership training initiatives.¹²

Roybal was an influential leader who made an impact in his neighborhood and local community, through his foundational work with the CSO and MAPA in California, and through other organizations both locally and nationally. Throughout his career he found ways to promote political participation and public service, especially by mentoring a number of future leaders, including his daughter, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard; future L.A. mayor Tom Bradley; and L.A. County Supervisor Gloria Molina. Both Roybal and his wife Lucille were honored locally and nationally for their tireless leadership and community service. The Roybal legacy lives on in the Lucille and Edward R. Roybal Foundation, which provides Latinos and youth with opportunities for education, community service, and job and leadership training.¹³ During this critical period of social and political action in Los Angeles, activists like Roybal and McGrath laid the foundations for Latino activism and grassroots politics through well-established organizations and relationships that would later make waves, beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the new century.

L.A.'s diffuse political structure allowed space for civic leaders to emerge from within the region's minority communities, inspired in part by social injustice. The creation of community organizations to address the social and civic needs of neighborhoods that lacked a political voice would help launch the careers of a number of important leaders, and would later influence California and national politics. Despite the presence of boiling racial tensions and rapidly changing demographics in the region, people outside the establishment forged pathways to civic leadership in both formal and informal spaces by harnessing social and political capital and finding ways to collaborate in pursuit of specific goals.

Further Reading:

Alice Greenfield McGrath papers, 1917-2009. Collection #1490, Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Burt, Kenneth C. "The Power of a Mobilized Citizenry and Coalition Politics: The 1949 Election of Edward R. Roybal to the Los Angeles City Council." *Southern California Quarterly* 85:4 (Winter 2003): 413-438.

Burt, Kenneth C. *The Search for a Civic Voice: California Latino Politics*. Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 2007.

Diaz, Katherine A. "Congressman Edward Roybal: Los Angeles Before the 1960's." *Caminos* 4:7 (Jul-Aug 1983).

"Founders History." Roybal Foundation. www.roybalfoundation.org/founders-history (accessed Jan 8, 2017).

Gallego, Herman, Gilbert Padilla, Alex Zermeno, Luis Zarate, and Gretchen Laue. CSO Documentary: "Organize! The Lessons of the CSO." Farmworker Movement Documentation Project. San Diego: UC San Diego Library, 2010.

McWilliams, Carey. *Southern California: An Island on the Land*. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946.

Ramirez, Catherine S. *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009.

Ramos, George. "Pioneer in Latino Politics in Los Angeles." *Los Angeles Times* (Oct 26, 2005).

Roosevelt, Margot. "Alice McGrath dies at 92; activist backed defendants in 1942 Sleepy Lagoon trial." *Los Angeles Times* (Nov 29, 2009).

Sanchez, George J. "Edward R. Roybal and the Politics of Multiracialism." *Southern California Quarterly* 92 (Spring 2010): 51-73.

"Sleepy Lagoon Trial: The Sleepy Lagoon Murder Trial of 1942." *Zoot Suit Discovery Guide*. <http://research.pomona.edu/zootsuit/en/trial/> (accessed Mar 7, 2017).

Sonenshein, Raphael J. *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Terkel, Studs. *Coming of Age: Growing Up in the Twentieth Century*. New York: The New Press, 1995.

Thompson, Gabriel. “Meet the Long-Forgotten Organizer Who Inspired Cesar Chavez to Become an Activist.” *The Nation* (Mar 31, 2016).

- ¹ Studs Terkel, *Coming of Age: Growing Up in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 361.
- ² Carlos Valdez Lozano, “To Alice McGrath, who changed the world,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 6, 2009. Quotation taken from Lozano in: Kathleen Wilson, “Activist Alice McGrath Dies,” *Ventura County Star*, Nov 27, 2009.
- ³ Traci Hukill, “The Gripes of McGrath,” *Metro Santa Cruz*, Oct 10, 1996, <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/cruz/10.10.96/mcgrath-9641.html> (accessed Mar 15, 2017); Terkel, *Coming of Age*, 364.
- ⁴ George Ramos, “Pioneer in Latino Politics in Los Angeles,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 26, 2005.
- ⁵ “Founders History,” Roybal Foundation, www.roybalfoundation.org/founders-history (accessed Jan 8, 2017).
- ⁶ The organization was initially launched as the Community Political Organization in June 1947, but renamed itself the Community Service Organization in September 1947.
- ⁷ “Founders History.”
- ⁸ Kenneth C. Burt, “The Power of a Mobilized Citizenry and Coalition Politics: The 1949 Election of Edward R. Roybal to the Los Angeles City Council,” *Southern California Quarterly* 85 (Winter 2003).
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ramos, “Pioneer in Latino Politics in Los Angeles.”
- ¹¹ “Founders History.” Roybal authored the first Bilingual Education Bill in 1967, which became the Bilingual Education Act of 1968.
- ¹² Gabriel Thompson, “Meet the Long-Forgotten Organizer Who Inspired Cesar Chavez to Become an Activist,” *The Nation*, Mar 31, 2016. Fred Ross is broadly considered one of the most influential organizers in California. He mentored Cesar Chavez, helped found the CSO with Roybal, and helped secure convictions for excessive force by LAPD officers. Several authors have argued that the work of the CSO, Chavez, and organizer Marshall Ganz, as well as the coalition politics of Tom Bradley, would serve as models for the presidential campaign of Barack Obama in 2008. California, the argument goes, is the pulse beat of the nation, often foreshadowing what is to come for the rest of America. See Gabriel Thompson, *America’s Social Arsonist: Fred Ross and Grassroots Organizing in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
- ¹³ “Founders History.”

1940s–1960s: Remaking Downtown Los Angeles through Urban Renewal Policy

Beginning in the 1940s, a combination of federal urban renewal policy and local implementation played a significant role in shaping the urban landscape of Los Angeles. Following the war, civic leaders pursued a goal-oriented agenda aimed at addressing what they perceived as the region's biggest problems. Those problems included a housing shortage of crisis proportions and a belief that Los Angeles needed to catch up to the nation's other great cities by acquiring a major league baseball team, a world-class performing arts center, and a convention center. L.A.'s decentralized municipal political structure once again influenced strategic plans because political officials had to rely heavily on county collaboration, federal and state policy, and partnerships with corporate elites, universities, research institutes, and quasi-public agencies to achieve urban goals. The immediate postwar period can be characterized as one of mixed successes, in terms of civic leadership and civic initiatives, in part because the most far-reaching and most visible civic initiatives were typically led by a narrow contingent of white elites—the most powerful businesspeople, politicians, private citizens acting with publicly appointed authority, and increasingly, entertainment industry leaders.

The most successful of these efforts was Dorothy Chandler's campaign to construct the L.A. Music Center (1964). Chandler, wife of *Los Angeles Times* publisher Norman Chandler, raised an unprecedented \$18.4 million toward funding a downtown performing arts center. She was a well-respected cultural leader who led the campaign to save the Hollywood Bowl from permanent closure in 1951, and her philanthropic activities made her a major power player in post-World War II Los Angeles. Chandler's Music Center campaign represents a significant shift in the history of civic leadership in Los Angeles because it united powerful but disparate elites in pursuit of a collective goal. The Music Center project became the catalyst for other important civic and cultural plans, and it became a key feature of urban renewal plans in the downtown area.

Civic leaders in Los Angeles attempted to construct a world-class performing arts center beginning in the early 1940s, but it was not until federal, state, and local urban renewal policies aligned that the effort was finally successful. Initially, urban renewal in Los Angeles focused on public housing, but by the mid-1950s, a contentious political climate forced a

drastic reduction in the city's public housing plans.¹ Former public housing sites presented pro-growth civic leaders with the opportunity to replace designated slums and blighted districts with commercial and cultural construction as the preferred engines for redevelopment. The creation of a new business district in Bunker Hill and the Music Center's construction are two examples of how civic leaders in Los Angeles used federal housing and urban renewal policies to create a new spatial and cultural civic identity. However, slash-and-burn-style slum clearance in downtown Los Angeles disrespected the viewpoint of the people urban renewal was supposed to help by destroying a vibrant, if poor, residential neighborhood in Bunker Hill. The controversial project would languish because of complex federal funding requirements and political maneuverings that left some of the vacant land untouched for decades.

Of equal importance to urban renewal policy in remaking downtown Los Angeles was the emergence of a cultural coalition that represented significant shifts in political and social alliances after World War II. In Los Angeles, the contours of planning and economic growth had always been shaped by both private planning initiatives and public policy. However, the nature and breadth of public-private partnerships shifted as cultural initiatives garnered support from a wider circle of Angelenos that included different factions of power within the city. This new cultural coalition—first brought together in support of an ailing Hollywood Bowl in 1951—included members of the political, economic, and social establishment, such as John Anson Ford, Edward Carter, John McCone, and Neil Petree. But the coalition also invited for the first time newly wealthy captains of finance and industry, such as Howard Ahmanson and Norton Simon, as well as Jewish elites from arts and motion picture circles. The crafting of this cultural coalition led by Chandler played a pivotal role in forging closer nonpartisan relationships between business leaders, cultural leaders, and political officials. This emerging coalition pursued a private sector-driven vision for how to redevelop Los Angeles, especially downtown. This merging vision for downtown redevelopment came together most fully in the Music Center project, which physically linked a cultural institution with the L.A. Civic Center and the city's oldest urban renewal project at Bunker Hill.

Although there were sometimes deep tensions within this emerging coalition about the cultural vision for Los Angeles, its members united on key goals: the need for increased public support for the arts; a narrow view of the constituency for the arts that emphasized “uplift”; and an expanding vision of arts infrastructure as a partner in urban and economic development. That



A 1966 view of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion from South Bunker Hill Avenue. A Queen Anne Revival style home sits at left. The redevelopment of downtown LA's Civic Center Mall, including the construction of the Music Center, was accompanied by the destruction of the Bunker Hill neighborhood as part of a broader urban renewal effort during the 1950s and 60s. Efforts to preserve a number of Bunker Hill's historic homes by moving them to Heritage Square were frustrated by arsonists in 1969. Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library.

previously fragmented social, political, and economic circles united in support of cultural institution-building was remarkable. However, this alliance would not last, as coalition members' vision for Los Angeles began to diverge in terms of what would be best for the city's future. While the coalition certainly underwent internal divisions, complicated by big egos and conflicting personalities, external pressures and political fragmentation also drove this alliance apart. More importantly, this vision for the future of Los Angeles, imagined by a powerful cultural coalition, lacked any meaningful inclusion of most nonwhite communities. This occurred because the elite cultural vision in part aimed to solve the broad social tensions that had been building as a result of rapidly changing demographics since World War II. However, deep-seated class and racial tensions in Los Angeles began to manifest themselves in an emerging oppositional culture that challenged the status quo through the establishment of vernacular cultural spaces.

The campaign to construct the Music Center drew on Progressive Era ideas of spiritual uplift and democratic access to culture, and promoted the center as a place for all Angelenos to come together. Yet, while the use of such language suggested a belief in the

concept of cultural democracy and encompassed concerted efforts to reach out to underprivileged communities, these efforts continued to reflect elite conceptions of what constituted worthwhile culture. The constellation of forces ruling Los Angeles—and the overlapping networks from which the cultural coalition drew—shows that a narrow group of white elites possessed layers of power that controlled the city's business, civic, and cultural institutions without regard for alternative visions. The opening of the L.A. County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 1965 was another representation of the same narrow, elite viewpoint present in the Music Center, but LACMA came under vocal criticism in its first decade because museum officials mostly ignored local artists of color.

Dorothy Chandler is considered one of Los Angeles's most accomplished civic leaders during this era because of her ability to garner broad civic collaboration, and she is credited with single-handedly leading the crusade to finance and construct the Music Center.² This perception of her certainly fits the "great person" model of charismatic leadership—the focus on personality and an "assumption that leaders are likely to be born not made."³ But Chandler's leadership style also fits the mold of the "task-oriented leaders,

who are concerned with group tasks rather than relationships among group members.” Such people are “able to create the conditions under which they can direct the activities of others, while at the same time creating an environment in which group members feel valued and trusted. Within this schema, leaders are a member of the group—and broadly reflective of their aspirations, backgrounds, and culture—but also an agent for change and difference. The “charismatic” behavior that some leaders exhibit is seen to be symptomatic of this drive for change, both differentiating the leader from others and helping to create an environment in which they are able to set an agenda.”⁴ Chandler herself believed that “the most important thing ... is not a formula but a person who will be a catalyst for the project—someone so dedicated to the purpose that he will stay with it until the job is completed.”⁵ She believed success required a clear, well-articulated vision and strong leadership to see it through. However, the perception of Chandler as a “lightning rod for bringing about change and positive development” obscures the work of mostly women volunteers that she oversaw in her quest to fulfill her fundraising goals.⁶ Still, the Music Center project would have languished for years had Chandler been unable to capture and hold the attention of local politicians, civic power players, and donors. Instead, the diffuse power structure of Los Angeles allowed the space for a charismatic and powerful individual to take charge of the project and use a variety of pathways to garner the support needed to see it through. Chandler’s contemporaries drew on her example to achieve similar grand civic goals, such as Edward Carter’s campaign to finance and construct LACMA.

The Music Center project was an uncontroversial manifestation of urban renewal policy and the effort to remake downtown Los Angeles. Civic leaders such as Chandler and County Supervisor John Anson Ford successfully linked cultural planning to urban policy not only because the Music Center fit in with an ongoing urban renewal ethos, but also because cultural connections to urban renewal made such projects more palatable to the general citizenry.

The storied success of the Music Center cannot mask the legacy of racism and displacement that played out in Los Angeles during and after World War II. The long-term effects of the internment of people of Japanese descent in the early 1940s—more than 100,000 people and their descendants—is only one example of the forces of urban change. Internment utterly reshaped urban and suburban demography. Forced out-migration from neighborhoods such as Little Tokyo fostered a concomitant in-migration of other ethnic and racial

groups; African American wartime workers and others recast formerly Japanese enclaves as “Bronzeville” neighborhoods of greater and lesser size.⁷ But internment cast a long demographic and settlement legacy. To where did the victims of internment return? Could they even go home again—to housing, jobs, businesses, relationships, neighbors? Generations later, the impact yet reverberates.

The return of Japanese internees is but one facet of demographic diffusion by way of racial discrimination. Postwar segregation, codified in federal, state, and local banking and loan practices (codifications further enforced by on-the-ground social practice), displaced and divided populations from Santa Monica to Watts, from Culver City to Whittier, and from Lakewood to Glendale.⁸ Postwar challenges to segregation in neighborhoods and schools, and in jobs and advancement, arose in court challenges and in the shape of civil rights activism. Each victory was hard fought, full of drama and pain, and the efforts of individuals like Loren Miller and Floyd Covington (along with allies both in and outside of the African American community), and of the NAACP or the Urban League, changed the landscape gradually but no less heroically for the pace.

The trajectory of the public housing agenda in the City of Los Angeles during the early 1950s shows how the city’s decentralized power structure deeply limited its ability to carry out urban programs and policies. This proved especially glaring and true when the mayor and City Council disagreed on policy and direction. Such antagonism left the city vulnerable to interference by a business establishment with differing views on how to approach urban redevelopment.

Chavez Ravine is the most well-known and controversial case of how Los Angeles civic leaders failed to capitalize on federal urban renewal policy to address the region’s severe postwar housing shortage. Local implementation of urban renewal policy not only failed to solve the postwar housing crisis for low-income families but indeed exacerbated racial, ethnic, and political polarization in Los Angeles. Mayor Fletcher Bowron entered office in 1938 as a nonpartisan reformer opposed to the “elite growth machine.” Committed to managed municipal growth through rational planning, Bowron supported the city’s adolescent public housing program and encouraged the City Council to approve 10 housing projects.⁹ The public housing program proceeded with the support of organized labor, religious groups, the National Negro Congress, the Spanish-language press, and various housing advocate groups. Their support stemmed from a hopeful optimism for racial harmony in such dwellings. As

historian Don Parson argues, public housing at this time was seen as the key to building a new social life within a democratic community and improving race relations.¹⁰ This housing-led vision for development and planning would briefly reign as an imperative municipal goal in the immediate postwar years.

Bowron initially garnered unanimous approval of the City Council in August 1949 to apply for 10,000 public housing units in Los Angeles under the 1949 Federal Housing Act.¹¹ Los Angeles was one of the first large cities in the nation to receive federal funding for public housing. The L.A. Community Redevelopment Agency, or CRA, was established in 1948 to oversee the city's urban renewal. The CRA included on its inaugural board several private developers, a choice made by Bowron to appease conservative business leaders, as well as City Council members who saw the agency as an agent of socialism.¹² Although it was not without its detractors, public housing gained widespread approval because many believed the private housing industry could not fully address the city's extreme housing shortage. The CRA designated the primarily Latino working-class neighborhood of Chavez Ravine as one of the city's first slum clearance and public housing projects in 1949.¹³

However, the public housing project slated for Chavez Ravine became embroiled in controversy amidst accusations of socialism in an increasingly conservative Cold War political climate. Public housing plans fell apart as opposition to public housing grew steadily, led by the powerful *Los Angeles Times*, the Chamber of Commerce, and eventually, the City Council.¹⁴ Business elites in particular feared that public housing projects, financed with federal funds, would subject local officials to new federal policies ending segregation in public housing.¹⁵ The cacophony of opposition drowned out housing reformers and left-leaning liberals who still believed in the program's potential. The controversy sealed the fate of the city's public housing program, leading to the cancellation of all but a few public housing projects in Los Angeles after 1953, and led to Bowron's ouster from City Hall that same year. The expansion of federal urban renewal policy in 1954 opened the way for prominent Angelenos and government officials to lure the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles through a complicated land exchange deal that legally turned Chavez Ravine—already cleared for the now-defunct housing project—over to team owner Walter O'Malley to construct Dodger Stadium. The clearance of the ravine and its eventual giveaway to O'Malley resulted in lengthy legal battles that divided the city.¹⁶

The controversial clearance and giveaway of Chavez Ravine was a missed opportunity for civic inclusion because of a 1950s political climate that doomed any

project labeled socialist or communist, as it did with L.A.'s large-scale public housing plans. A sizable low-income housing project like the one planned for Chavez Ravine had the potential to serve as a model for replication across the region. Historians and housing activists have lamented the loss of a viable alternative vision for redeveloping downtown Los Angeles in the immediate postwar years that might have encouraged housing equity and desegregation. It would be only one of many battles over equitable housing in the years to come. Ignoring the valued history of places and communities, as in the clearance of Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill, deepened racial and socio-economic tensions within Los Angeles that would contribute to social-movement politics in the late 1960s and '70s. Grassroots organizers became increasingly vocal in fighting government-



Los Angeles City Councilmember Edward Roybal standing with Manuel and Avrana Arechiga, daughters Aurora Vargas and Victoria Augustain, and granddaughters Ida and Ivy Augustain, the last remaining residents of Chavez Ravine, on May 19, 1959. The Ravine was one of the first so-called “slum clearance” sites in the City of Los Angeles to be slated for a public housing project. The site was almost entirely cleared prior to the project’s cancellation after the 1953 mayoral election. Roybal sharply criticized the city’s handling of evictions. Dodger Stadium broke ground on the site in 1959, four months after the Arechiga family was removed. Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library.

sponsored projects that appeared to harm, rather than protect, the region's poorest neighborhoods. One example is the successful fight to keep a convention center out of Elysian Park (discussed in the following section). A keen sense that civic leaders failed to represent a rapidly growing nonwhite population led organizers to work for change both through the system (i.e., elections) and outside it, through social-movement tactics. With the influx of new blood into local politics and the elevation of a new social elite who held a different approach to politics and philanthropy than in the past, Los Angeles civic leadership would undergo another considerable shift by the late 1960s. Coalition politics would result in new approaches to how civic initiatives were conceived and managed, and would ultimately coalesce under Mayor Tom Bradley in the 1970s and '80s.

The emergence of a broader cultural coalition, led by Chandler and invigorated by representatives from wider social and geographic circles, would guide the spatial redevelopment of downtown Los Angeles beginning with the Music Center, which became the catalyst for other important civic and cultural plans, including expanded downtown renewal projects and the construction of LACMA and Dodger Stadium. Civic initiatives during this era gave rise to increased public support for the arts and an expanding vision of building up arts infrastructure as a partner in urban and economic development. Also worth noting is the importance of local corporate leadership in shaping modern Los Angeles during this period, when boards and senior executives were deeply invested in what happened outside the office tower. However, by sacrificing vibrant, if poor, residential neighborhoods like Bunker Hill in the name of progress, many of L.A.'s urban renewal projects came to be seen as disrespecting the viewpoint or needs of the people urban renewal was supposed to help. The mistrust that resulted would complicate future efforts at public-private and cross-sector collaboration.

Further Reading:

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

Beer, Andrew, and Terry Clower. "Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions." *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 1:1 (2014): 5-20.

Bernstein, Shana. *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Davis, Margaret Leslie. *The Culture Broker: Franklin D. Murphy and the Transformation of Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. London, New York: Verso, 1990.

Fulton, William. *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles*. Point Arena, CA: Solano Press Books, 1997.

Jenks, Hillary. "Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post-World War II Los Angeles." *Southern California Quarterly* 93:2 (Summer 2011): 201-235.

Klein, Norman M. *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*. London, New York: Verso, 1997.

Parson, Don. "This Modern Marvel: Bunker Hill, Chavez Ravine, and the Politics of Modernism in Los Angeles." *Southern California Quarterly* 75:3-4 (Fall/Winter 1993): 333-350.

------. *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

------. "The Decline of Public Housing and the Politics of the Red Scare: The Significance of the Los Angeles Public Housing War." *Journal of Urban History* 33:3 (2007): 400-417.

Schrank, Sarah. *Art and the City: Civic Imagination and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

Thabet, Andrea. "Culture as Urban Renewal: Postwar Los Angeles and the Remaking of Public Space." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara (2013).

¹ This shift was due in large part to the passage of the 1954 Federal Housing Act, which allowed L.A.'s urban renewal agencies to pursue commercial and cultural development in place of public housing.

² "Brightness in the Air," *Time Magazine*, Dec 18, 1964.

³ Andrew Beer and Terry Clower, "Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions," *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 1:1 (2014): 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ "Brightness in the Air."

⁶ Beer and Clower, "Mobilizing leadership in cities and regions."

⁷ Hillary Jenks, "Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post-World War II Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 93 (Summer 2011).

⁸ Richard Rothstein, "Why Los Angeles is Still a Segregated City After All These Years," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 20, 2017; Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

⁹ Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 18-32; Tom Sitton, *Los Angeles Transformed: Fletcher Bowron's Urban Reform Revival, 1938-1953* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), xv. Los Angeles was one of the first large cities to apply for newly available funds through the 1937 Housing Act, which sparked the establishment of the Los Angeles City Housing Authority (CHA) in 1938. The CHA spearheaded efforts to clear slums and build low-rent housing with help from a U.S. Housing Authority (USHA) grant, but construction was delayed for several years due to public debate and City Council indecision. By March 1941, the CHA gained Council approval for the proposed projects, and had a strategy in place for managing equivalent slum clearance.

¹⁰ Parson, *Making a Better World*, 33-43. Housing advocate groups included the Citizens' Committee for Better Housing and the Citizens' Housing Council. Famed activist, lawyer, and author Carey McWilliams was a member of the Citizens' Committee for Better Housing. Despite the lengthy delays in putting together a comprehensive housing program and securing federal funding, the CHA was able to construct its first project, Ramona Gardens, between 1939 and 1941. Housing program advocates supported public housing, but not slum clearance. Low-income communities turned against public housing when places like Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine became targets for slum clearance.

¹¹ Sitton, *Los Angeles Transformed*, 157-158. See also "Bowron Plans Slum Riddance Move at Once," *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 1949; "Council Votes for 10,000 Housing Units," *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1949.

¹² Sitton, *Los Angeles Transformed*, 114; Parson, *Making a Better World*, 149.

¹³ Parson, *Making a Better World*, 69-81.

¹⁴ For example, see: "No 'Low Cost Housing' Provided," *Los Angeles Times* (1886-Current File), Jun 23, 1949; "Home Building Seen Essential for U.S. Welfare," *Los Angeles Times* (1886-Current File), Jun 26, 1949.; "The Mayor's Housing Economics," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 August 1949; "Home Building in 1949-50," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 January 1949.

¹⁵ Mara Alexandra Marks, "Shifting Ground: Bureaucratic Politics and Redevelopment in Los Angeles, 1948-1998" (Master's Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1999), 84.

¹⁶ Sitton, *Los Angeles Transformed*, 157-160, 165-169; Parson, *Making a Better World*, 110-117, 126-135, 145-147; Don Parson, "This Modern Marvel: Bunker Hill, Chavez Ravine, and the Politics of Modernism in Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 75:3-4 (1993): 333-350; Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 207-208.

1960s-1980s: Environmental Activism Across the Metropolis

The Progressive Era prescription for greenspace as a democratizing force in society, and wholesome recreation as a deterrent to juvenile delinquency, remained as powerful motivators for parks and recreation advocates well into the mid-20th century.¹ However, the approach to public parks in Los Angeles continued much as it began, with uneven attention to the needs of all Los Angeles residents, and mixed results when it came to funding, improvements, and equitable distribution across diverse communities. After World War II, the neglect by public officials to supply adequate greenspace and recreation facilities for a booming population would become a deliberate focus of grassroots activism not only to protect existing green spaces, but to force city and county officials to do more; nonetheless, success varied widely by neighborhood.

In 1947, Los Angeles voters approved a charter amendment that combined separate parks and recreation departments into one Department of Recreation and Parks, and at the same time approved a \$12.5 million bond issue for parks and playgrounds. The decision to prioritize recreation over parks in the department's name was a deliberate one, signaling the city's commitment to elevating purposeful and active greenspace over passive, tranquil, or landscaped park space. The merger occurred on the heels of a \$39.5 million bond issue passed in 1945, the largest bond issue ever in an American city at that time.² An expanded Recreation and Parks Department increased facilities and services all over the city, yet, even with the 1945 bond funds, the need for additional park space remained acute. This long history of neglect translated into only 4 percent of dedicated park space in the city of Los Angeles by 1965. By comparison, the cities of San Francisco and New York had 13 percent and 17 percent, respectively, of acreage devoted to parks.³

A 1966 California Department of Parks and Recreation study also disclosed that Los Angeles desperately needed more park space, and by 1980, an additional 80,000 acres would be needed to provide sufficient space for leisure and recreation.⁴ By the mid-1960s, decades of inconsistent park policies, and even blatant disregard for protection of parks under the city charter, left all open space in Los Angeles vulnerable to development schemes.

One of the most controversial but lesser-known examples of this phenomenon took place in March

1965, when the L.A. City Council approved a proposal to build a convention center and exhibition hall in downtown's Elysian Park. The proposal called for the clearance of 63 acres of parkland, which included the park's most popular landscaped picnic and recreation area near the Avenue of the Palms, including the old Recreation Lodge. Increased traffic and speeding cars would detrimentally affect park users and nearby neighbors, and any future expansion of the convention center would further erode parklands and exacerbate traffic congestion.

In response, retired journalist Grace E. Simons launched the Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park (CCSEP), and crafted a well-organized and inventive 18-month grassroots campaign to defeat the convention center proposal. Simons's decades of journalism experience, with stints at the historically black newspapers *Los Angeles Sentinel* and *California Eagle*, prepared her well for the battle. She and the CCSEP built a cross-class, multiracial coalition of nearby residents and park users, labor leaders, elected officials, modernist architects, and conservation activists.⁵ They argued that no one could measure the "cost in sociological terms, in the loss of a needed recreational area, in the blighting of a residential neighborhood and in traffic congestion." The CCSEP's efforts to save the park illustrates the emerging strength of grassroots resistance in the tug-of-war between preservationists and a pro-growth coalition determined to redevelop downtown that took place between March 1965 and August 1966, when the Elysian Park plan was officially rejected.

The struggle to save Elysian Park represented a moment in which an alternative vision for the future of Los Angeles emerged, one that challenged the direction of urban renewal and imagined instead a more livable city that centered on human needs. This battle also occurred within the context of a burgeoning environmental movement in the early 1960s, bolstered by publications such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which re-energized those who advocated for conservation and protection of public parks. At the same time, encroachment on public parks for urban renewal projects across the nation increasingly met with public protest, including in Los Angeles. Such encroachment occurred because of post-World War II federal urban renewal policies that sanctioned eminent domain seizure of park space if the land was needed for a "public purpose" such as highway construction. Elysian Park was one of many local parks that lost acreage to highways, which brought air and noise pollution "uncomfortably close" to parks and playgrounds.⁶ Elysian Park also lost roughly 30 acres to



A February 1966 public bus bench advertisement in support of the Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park, which asked for contributions to the cause, and offered an additional measure of publicity designed to remind the public what was at stake. Fifty bench advertisements appeared throughout the city, donated by a supporter, Bud Lewis Suhl, at United Bench Advertisers, Los Angeles. Courtesy Los Angeles City Archives—Office of the City Clerk.

the construction of Dodger Stadium, which reinforced the view that park space was merely undeveloped land that could be successfully appropriated by the city for nonpark purposes.⁷

The CCSEP focused on two main goals: protect Elysian Park from development, and push for public policies that would protect open space now and in the future. Using \$750 in membership dues and small contributions, Simons and the CCSEP pursued an airtight legal action plan and launched a multipronged strategy of defense that was as local as potlucks in the park and as far-reaching as Washington, D.C., lobby efforts.⁸ They achieved this through letter-writing campaigns, public speeches, rallies, and petitions, and by securing radio, television, and print media coverage of their activities. For those opposed to the Elysian Park proposal, this struggle was about creating and maintaining a more humane urban environment that cherished open space and tranquility as an antidote to the smog, traffic, and unchecked growth that had plagued the region over the past 25 years. CCSEP's efforts helped define the terms of the debate about park, recreation, and open space policy, and laid the groundwork for future preservation and conservation struggles throughout greater Los Angeles.

The successful fight to save Elysian Park is an important example of grassroots resistance to elite-backed projects that privileged a white, highbrow vision for the area's urban landscape without regard for alternatives.⁹ The convention center park proposal was driven primarily by the same powerful, pro-growth coalition that helped construct the Music Center. For these businessmen, politicians, and city boosters, the struggle over where to build a convention center was about maintaining control over the economic development of Los Angeles while pursuing a specific version of the city's future through urban renewal that intended to reclaim the central city and counter suburban growth.¹⁰ However, a large number of civic leaders who supported the Music Center refused to support the Elysian Park proposal, including former L.A. County Supervisor John Anson Ford. City Council members Rosalind Wiener Wyman, Marvin Braude, and future mayor Tom Bradley also opposed the Elysian Park convention center.

CCSEP's victory signified a critical shift in the formal and informal power structures shaping Los Angeles during the 1960s, including the push for greater community control. By combining the clout of high-profile supporters like Ford and Bradley with a broad-

based grassroots campaign, Simons and the committee created an alternative power base able to challenge an elite-led civic coalition long used to controlling urban development. This particular protest also shows how local residents who easily supported a cultural cause like the Music Center did not necessarily support an economic-centered cause, especially one that would primarily benefit downtown business interests while destroying precious park space. The controversy is one example of how a diffuse municipal political structure and discord amongst the City Council allowed private power to exert undue influence over the path of urban renewal. The CCSEP's campaign was also indicative of responses to urban renewal nationwide.

The committee's efforts to fight the Elysian Park proposal represented not only a successful case of grassroots resistance to urban renewal, but also an indication of a changing political culture. It became clear by the mid-1960s that the most effective method of exerting political influence in Los Angeles—especially in response to elite-backed projects like the convention center—was through direct-action tactics. The battle for Elysian Park was representative of broader changes taking place in the power structures of Los Angeles as formerly marginalized groups began gaining a foothold in city politics by deploying the politics of protest in more effective ways. The committee's success in mobilizing working-class residents to protest the convention center is only one example. The shift toward greater community control occurring in the 1960s, certainly pushed by civil rights groups, progressives, and the political left, was in step with direct-action tactics taken by urban dwellers nationwide. For the committee, direct action had become the only method of protest in a city largely pursuing nonhousing urban renewal after 1954. In the case of Elysian Park, the hidden costs of pilfering a public park could have far greater repercussions for future generations. This particular challenge to the pro-growth urban renewal ethos became a proving ground for the institutional, infrastructural, legal, and moral outlines of an emergent environmentalist movement that would become increasingly important in L.A. and nationwide.

In fact, a “new urban environmentalism” emerged in Los Angeles at precisely the same time that the Elysian Park fight began heating up in 1965. The regulation of land use based on environmental concerns—deteriorating open space and overbuilding in hillside communities—became a “potent, sometimes explosive, issue” in communities all over the state, from Coronado and Point Loma in the South to Santa Barbara on the Central Coast and the Bay Area in Northern California.

Author Mike Davis argues that urban environmentalism began as a homeowner concern in the mid-1960s when “new development was perceived as a categorical threat to the detached culture of low-density residential life,” especially in wealthy hillside enclaves concerned about property values. Davis states that these “old-money resorts and retirement centers” were determined to prevent what was perceived as “disruptive development.”¹¹ Historian Jennifer Stevens explains how, in the case of the Santa Monica Mountains (SMM), hillside neighborhood organizations initially came together to prevent overdevelopment because it was a threat both to property values and to their privileged way of life. Between 1952 and 1960, the growth of hillside developments led to increased traffic, smog, and “the flattening of mountaintops” by developers, which caused “serious erosion” and “contributed to the devastating floods” and fires that threatened both lives and property.¹² Elitism and the protection of a luxurious living standard in their exclusive neighborhoods certainly motivated these hill-dwelling activists, and limited their ability to “garner the public support that would truly provide a long-term solution.” Protecting open space “for the sake of open space” was not originally their purpose.¹³ It was only when SMM residents combined concern for suburban sprawl with the emerging environmental movement that they found permanent success.¹⁴ These early “urban environmentalists” fought for “regional and urban planning in order to preserve the mountains and establish a better city.”¹⁵

After major floods in 1952, a number of SMM homeowner associations formed the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations when homeowners discovered the city of Los Angeles lacked hillside homebuilding guidelines and rezoning requirements.¹⁶ The federation brought together homeowner associations from elite neighborhoods such as Beverly Glen and Benedict Canyon in what Davis calls “the earliest and most powerful coalition of homeowners’ associations in the country.”¹⁷ Initially, property values were the federation’s main concern, and members focused their efforts on homebuilding restrictions such as grading and lot size minimums, as well as limiting development to single-family construction “at the expense of multifamily developments.”¹⁸ The federation’s most vocal leaders during the 1960s and ’70s were typically housewives, “supported by their husbands and ... freed by their school-aged children’s daily absences.” These women attended meetings, wrote letters, published articles, and “spent countless hours at city hall.” Collaborating with residents from different hillside neighborhoods allowed these women to share strategies while



In 1960, the California State Division of Highways opened a new Mulholland Drive Bridge over what would become the San Diego Freeway extension from Brentwood to the San Fernando Valley. The threat of freeway construction in Malibu Canyon and on Mulholland Drive atop the Santa Monica Mountains catalyzed an anti-development, pro-park coalition linking the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations with the Friends of the Santa Monica Mountains, Parks and Seashore (founded in 1964) and the Sierra Club. It was not until 1978 that Congress would act formally to preserve the initial 150,000 acres of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Courtesy of the California Department of Transportation.

“building a fulfilling community” that would become critical in the following decade.¹⁹

Despite the federation’s efforts, hillside building continued at an alarming rate, even after the city passed a “Federation-inspired grading ordinance” in 1952.²⁰ By 1960, the L.A. City Council, with support from Mayor Norris Poulson, created an SMM Master Plan designed to limit development in the future. Still, the

city neglected full enforcement of the plan’s guidelines, despite the federation’s pressure to do so.²¹ It was not until the threat of freeway construction on scenic Mulholland Drive at the top of the SMM in the mid-1960s that the federation’s anti-development coalition became critical to the protection of the SMM. The California Division of Highways planned to construct a four-lane expressway. The federation joined with local pro-park advocates—the Sierra Club and Friends

of the Santa Monica Mountains—to successfully halt the Mulholland Drive freeway in 1968.²² Recognizing their mutual goals, pro-park advocates and anti-development activists formed an alliance “to capitalize on that power” by sharing strategies and “using each other’s constituencies” to protect the SMM once and for all. In order to “win public support,” the federation in particular had to redefine its goals more broadly by emphasizing protection of open space. This shift would be a crucial step in saving the SMM.²³

After the fight to stop the Mulholland Drive expressway, pro-park and anti-development advocates established the Santa Monica Mountain Regional Park Association, tasked with lobbying the federal government to establish federal protections for the mountains and open space by creating a regional park in the Santa Monica Mountains.²⁴ Enter City Councilman Marvin Braude, a vocal opponent of the Elysian Park convention center proposal who also happened to preside over Brentwood’s Crestwood Hills Homeowners Association, a member of the Hillside Federation. Braude won his council seat in April 1965, defeating a supporter of the Elysian Park convention center proposal who also opposed preservation efforts in the SMM.²⁵ With Braude now on the City Council, the SMM conservation movement received significant support at crucial moments. Other groups that supported the nascent organization included the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and League of Women Voters. As the efforts to create a state park and secure federal funding ramped up, the L.A. City Council and the L.A. County Board of Supervisors lent full support as well.²⁶ As Stevens tells it, “victory at the federal level hinged on the ... effective use of language and arguments regarding air quality, health, and benefits to many segments of the population.” The Regional Park Association also argued that “the beautiful mountains and coastline were not a resource solely intended for neighborhood residents nor even for the entire population of Los Angeles, but instead for the entire nation.” In other words, the new association focused on the need for a “wild refuge” in overcrowded cities, especially for “inner city children that could not afford to be sent to the Sierra Nevada for camp,” and finally, for a “clean air zone to escape the city’s vicious smog.” These arguments proved persuasive. In 1978, Congress passed a bill to create the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.²⁷

As a result of the legislation, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) was established in 1980 to “acquire open space, scenic easements, dedications of land and pre-acquisition options in anticipation of federal park purchases over the next five years.”

The conservancy did not have “the power to approve or deny building permits, subdivision applications or zone changes.”²⁸ The conservancy was set up to become self-sustaining by authorizing it to acquire any government-owned land within its boundaries, as well as resell land for development, or to develop additional parkland.²⁹ Since its creation in 1980, the SMMC has “helped to preserve over 73,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and has improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California. Additionally, it has given grants to nonprofit organizations for educational and interpretation programs that have served hundreds of thousands of children and other park visitors.” Like the majority of nonprofit organizations in the region, the conservancy pursues its goals of preservation, restoration, and education “through direct action, alliances, partnerships, and joint powers authorities.” The conservancy attributes its success to partnerships developed with local government, state and federal agencies, landowners, and other nonprofits. It also continues to value community participation and respect for the region’s changing dynamics.³⁰

These two environmental stories demonstrate a clear socio-economic element at play in the ease with which the SMM were protected, yet Elysian Park’s working-class neighbors had to fight tooth and nail to stop a privately sponsored development project, and repeatedly fought additional encroachment efforts in the decades that followed. Between the Elysian Park convention center battle and the long struggle to preserve the Santa Monica Mountains, urban environmentalism and hillside conservation became regular topics of discussion in city politics. Like the Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park, Hillside Federation leaders seized the chance to chart a new course for Los Angeles by pressing for permanent policy changes. There is no question that the Hillside Federation’s and CCSEP’s alternative visions for development in Los Angeles *and* the environmentalist sensibility that emerged during the Elysian Park campaign were still in-formation concepts as of the mid-1960s. But, as Stevens notes, these activists were “early harbingers of environmental values.”³¹ Davis asserts, however, that “hillside homeowners were still caricaturable as ‘limousine conservationists’” because their efforts were “widely seen as a hypocritical attempt by the rich to use ecology to detour Vietnam-era growth around their luxury enclaves.”³² Regardless of their motivations, these activists were part of a move toward greater community control in Los Angeles, and their successes demonstrated that ordinary folks could make an impact on city politics and help determine the future of development in

their own neighborhoods, whether rich or poor. Both organizations played a vital role in shaping modern Los Angeles by redefining appropriate uses of parks and open spaces.³³

Beyond park-based advocacy, innovative community activism aimed at environmental justice emerged during this period to challenge inequality, resist divisive policies, and defeat hazardous industrial development, with varying degrees of success. The placement of highways and opposition to highway construction, for example, depended on race and resources, power and privilege. In Los Angeles, urban planners and political officials successfully exercised power over communities of color (black, Latino) to construct freeways that would divide neighbors, displace residents, and damage the health and environment of those who remained. In the disadvantaged neighborhood of Boyle Heights, where residents lacked resources and a political voice, the inability to block freeway construction led those with means to relocate to suburbs, while poorer residents with little resources or power to keep fighting were left to contend with the air and noise pollution of daily traffic. The communities of color left behind often expressed their opposition through cultural channels—art, literature, photography, festivals, and other methods. For example, the most vibrant visual expression of Chicano/a opposition to highway construction during the 1950s and '60s can be found in activist Judith Baca's murals, which serve as a reminder of "spatial injustice."³⁴ Meanwhile, in the wealthy, white community of Beverly Hills, anti-highway advocates successfully blocked highway construction in 1975 by using every resource within their power to defeat a highway project that would have run through the community's center. Beverly Hills residents stopped the project and kept their community intact.³⁵

Similar to highway controversies, battles over unwanted land-use projects gave rise to community activism and environmental justice organizing, particularly in East and Central Los Angeles, where hazardous industrial development disproportionately affected residents. Populated primarily by immigrants and citizens of color, these neighborhoods located workers and industrial activity within close proximity, leading to frequent land-use conflicts. Protests to keep detrimental projects out of their neighborhoods were rooted in progressive and leftist politics, shaped by "a strong working-class consciousness that is reflected in both historic and contemporary movements for unionization and socialism and against ... environmental racism."³⁶ The attempt by the City of

Los Angeles to build waste-to-energy incinerators in South Los Angeles in the 1980s galvanized local African American women to form the Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles. The group not only successfully blocked the project but also went on to "play a key role in the region's environmental justice movement," support new community housing, and become "a major force in the development of a citywide recycling program."³⁷ Battles over highway construction and hazardous land use showcase both the role of inequality in shaping outcomes and the move toward greater community control during this era.

These environmental efforts signified a shift in the diffuse power structures of Los Angeles—formal and informal—that guided the city's development. The City Council had slowly become more diverse by this time with the election of three African Americans, including Tom Bradley, along with the election in 1953 of Rosalind Wiener Wyman, who was also the Council's youngest member to date, only its second woman (after Estelle Lawton Lindsey in 1915), and its first Jewish member in more than half a century. Formerly marginalized groups deployed the politics of protest more effectively, as was the case with the Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park. Similarly, as with the Music Center project, the crafting of a more inclusive cultural coalition changed the dynamics of elite power in L.A. and eventually led to upheaval and disagreement among elites about what would be best for the city. Dorothy Chandler in particular managed to incense the WASP establishment by inviting a largely Jewish community of movie moguls and finance industry executives into the elite social fold through large contributions to the Music projects. The inclusion of West Los Angeles Jews helped dilute the exclusivity of the area's elite social circles. Changing dynamics also occurred within prominent local business and civic organizations. For example, Norman Chandler no longer ran the day-to-day operations of his family's newspaper. Norman's son Otis became publisher of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1960 and turned a formerly provincial paper known for its economically conservative and Republican biases into a nationally respected, fair-coverage paper. But it meant business elites who socialized with the Chandler family could no longer count on the newspaper's unbiased support. Instead, they had to go through formalities and committees to gain editorial endorsement for a project.³⁸ This shift in private civic leadership and informal power structures indicated broader changes in the social tide of Los Angeles as the older generation of the establishment began retiring or dying off. Often, the scions of elite families who inherited the reins of establishment businesses

and large fortunes—like Otis Chandler—saw the world in a different way. The breaking apart of Dorothy Chandler’s cultural coalition, coupled with political and social upheaval during the 1960s and ’70s, impacted the usual way of getting things done in L.A. Instead of the unbalanced power wielded by a cohesive business community, a broader number of stakeholders—unions, nonprofits, neighborhood associations (councils since 1996), and socio-political organizations like the CSO—gained a stronger foothold within the diffuse power structure of Los Angeles.

L.A.’s unique quality of diffusion opened up spaces for ordinary citizens to claim leadership roles by harnessing social capital and building multiracial, cross-class, cross-sector alliances to achieve specific goals. These stories are indications of a changing political culture in which formerly marginalized groups deployed the politics of protest in more effective ways—as evidenced by CCSEP’s ability to mobilize both middle- and working-class residents to protest the elite-backed convention center project. In Los Angeles, direct-action tactics and the push for greater community control would become deeply entrenched strategies in the decades to come.

Further Reading:

Aron, Hillel. “Who Runs Los Angeles? A Search for Today’s Power Brokers.” In: *Under the Influence*. USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. <http://usc.news21.com/hillel-story/introduction-home-page> (accessed Nov 7, 2016).

Avila, Eric. *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. London, New York: Verso, 1990.

------. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

Garcia, Robert, and Erica S. Flores. “Anatomy of the Urban Parks Movement: Equal Justice, Democracy, and Livability in Los Angeles.” In: *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, edited by Robert D. Bullard. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2005.

Parson, Don. “This Modern Marvel: Bunker Hill, Chavez Ravine, and the Politics of Modernism in Los Angeles.” *Southern California Quarterly* 75:3-4 (Fall/Winter 1993): 333-350.

------. *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Pulido, Laura, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng. *A People’s Guide to Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Sitton, Tom. *Los Angeles Transformed: Fletcher Bowron’s Urban Reform Revival, 1938-1953*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Stevens, Jennifer. “Living on the Edge: Hillside Women’s Plans for a Wild Los Angeles, 1955-1970.” Conference presentation. Western Association of Women Historians annual conference (2009).

Thabet, Andrea. “Culture as Urban Renewal: Postwar Los Angeles and the Remaking of Public Space.” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara (2013).

Toland, James W., ed. *The Music Center Story: A Decade of Achievement, 1964-1974*. Los Angeles: Music Center Foundation, 1974.

1. Terence Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 13. Eventually, the idea of a "natural" environment as the path to social reform and the creation of a good society lost its power. As a consequence, urban parks experienced few changes and fell under the purview of bureaucrats more than park proponents.
2. Michael Eberts, "Recreation and Parks," in: *The Development of Los Angeles City Government* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles City Historical Society, 2007), 607-608. The merger made park needs subservient to recreation to some extent. Prior to the departmental merger, playgrounds had been subject to closure if the city deemed the space was needed for another purpose, and prior to World War II many of the city's playgrounds were seized for nonpark purposes as neighborhoods changed. The merger solved the playground impermanence problem by labeling playgrounds as parks—which were legally protected by the 1925 city charter (604, 607).
3. Richard Bergholz, "Roosevelt Hits Vorty on Elysian Park Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 24, 1965; Fawn M. Brodie, "Parks and Politics in Los Angeles," *The Reporter* 32 (Feb 11, 1965): 40.
4. "Acute Lack of L.A. Park Lands Seen," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 14, 1966.
5. Between the founding of CCSEP in February and the Council vote in March, Simons and CCSEP had enough time to begin building a coalition against the proposal and gather supporters to attend the March meeting in force to voice their opposition.
6. Eberts, "Recreation and Parks," 607-608.
7. On the stadium's adverse effects on Elysian Park, see *Elysian Park: New Strategies for the Preservation of Historic Open Space Resources* (Los Angeles: UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Jun 1990), VI-4 - VI-5.
8. Andrea Thabet, "Resisting Urban Renewal: Preserving Recreational Space And The Citizens Committee To Save Elysian Park, 1965-1966," in Andrea Thabet, *Culture as Urban Renewal: Postwar Los Angeles and the Remaking of Public Space* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013).
9. Elysian Park's history provides an excellent case study for how changes in leadership constituencies determined the success or failure of a project. For example, in 1895 a small private group of white elites consulted Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., about Elysian Park's development, but he declined the project because he deemed it to be too small.
10. James W. Toland, ed., *The Music Center Story: A Decade of Achievement, 1964-1974* (Los Angeles: Music Center Foundation, 1974), 89.
11. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London, New York: Verso, 1990) 170-171.
12. Jennifer Stevens, "Living on the Edge: Hillside Women's Plans for a Wild Los Angeles, 1955-1970" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Association of Women Historians, Berkeley, California, 2009), 3.
13. *Ibid.*, 7.
14. *Ibid.*, 8.
15. *Ibid.*, 2.
16. *Ibid.*, 3.
17. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 171; Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 3-4.
18. Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 4; Davis, *City of Quartz*, 171.
19. Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 6, 12.
20. *Ibid.*, 4.
21. *Ibid.*, 4.
22. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 172.
23. Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 9, 10.
24. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 172.
25. Erwin Baker, "Convention Center Still Faces a Rocky Road," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 18, 1965; Erwin Baker, "New Councilmen Say They'll Be Independent," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 14, 1965.
26. "Hearing Scheduled on Mountain Park," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 30, 1977.
27. Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 11.
28. Doug Smith, "Conservancy Advocated for Santa Monicas: Mountain Planners Prefer It to Zoning to Protect Mountains," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 4, 1979. L.A. County Supervisor Edmund D. Edelman advocated for the conservancy during his time on the County Board of Supervisors, helping to negotiate a deal between the SMM conservancy and developers planning to build luxury homes on the site. See Jocelyn Y. Stewart, "Ed Edelman, crusading L.A. County supervisor, dead at 85," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 12, 2016.
29. Martha L. Willman, "Schools Balk at Price Limits on Four Sites; Must Be Sold at Original Value to Park Conservancy," *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1980.
30. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Act was enacted in 1979 by Assembly Bill 1312 based on the recommendations of the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission.
31. Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 7.
32. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 173.
33. Stevens, "Living on the Edge," 8; Thabet, "Resisting Urban Renewal."
34. See, for example, "These Walls Can Talk: The Living Art of Judy Baca," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2016.
35. Eric Jaffe, "The Forgotten History of L.A.'s Failed Freeway Revolt," *CityLab*, Jul 23, 2014, <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2014/07/the-forgotten-history-of-las-failed-freeway-revolt/374843/> (accessed Oct 22, 2017); "Q&A: Eric Avila on the bitter legacy of L.A.'s freeways," *UCLA Newsroom*, Feb 5, 2015, <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/q-a:-eric-avila-on-the-bitter-legacy-of-l-a-s-freeways> (accessed Oct 22, 1975).
36. Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng, *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 76-77.
37. *Ibid.*, 123-124. Similar protests occurred over a proposed East Los Angeles prison and a Vernon incinerator project.
38. Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times, Its Publishers and Their Influence on Southern California* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 326.

1980s–2000s: The Bradley Coalition and the Revitalization of Downtown

Political shifts during the 1970s would irrevocably shape the economic and spatial landscape of Los Angeles over the following two decades, particularly with the election of Mayor Tom Bradley in 1973. During his unprecedented tenure as mayor (1973–1993), Bradley spearheaded a liberal, black-Jewish political coalition “dedicated to civil rights and social and economic programs for L.A.’s long-ignored minorities.”¹ Bradley entered local politics after serving in the LAPD for 21 years, the final few years as a lieutenant, the highest rank for a black officer at the time. After receiving a law degree in 1956 from Southwestern School of Law, Bradley retired from the LAPD to practice law for a year before running for City Council in 1963 (10th District). Bradley won the seat with the support of a biracial coalition that included politically active liberal whites, primarily Jews, and a broad swath of middle- and upper-class African Americans. The campaign drew on Bradley’s relationships and experiences forged from his involvement in the United Club, part of the liberal California Democratic Council, and from his volunteer work on the successful city council campaign (1949) of Edward Roybal. Roybal was a mentor and friend of Bradley’s, and his multiracial political coalition in the 1940s and ’50s in fact became the basis for Bradley’s political coalition in the 1970s and ’80s.² Bradley’s coalition was “born in the middle-class neighborhoods of southwestern L.A.,”³ particularly in the 10th District, which political scientist Raphael Sonenshein has called the “seedbed of the biracial alliance” because it was the “center of Black upward mobility and the site of major reform activity among white liberals.”⁴ Bradley’s council victory “demonstrated how an organized and united black community could overcome hostility and indifference to win political representation” in the early 1960s. Ultimately, “Los Angeles was a place where an innovative and powerful type of coalition was being tested.”⁵ Two other African American men were elected to the council in 1963—Gilbert Lindsay (9th District) and Billy G. Mills (8th District).

Bradley counted on the same biracial coalition to help elect him mayor of Los Angeles in 1973, and this long-standing coalition would help him win re-election four times. Bradley’s unsuccessful first run for mayor in 1969 occurred in the context of urban unrest and growing social and political activism, such as the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and the East L.A. blowouts, all dedicated to challenging the status quo regarding racial inequality and social

injustice in an increasingly diverse Los Angeles. Bradley’s campaign against incumbent Sam Yorty was considered a long shot. Although he was defeated, his campaign “came to symbolize the entire thrust of the African American movement for political representation in Los Angeles, while at the same time, the election was considered a major step on the road to biracial coalition power.”⁶ Four years later, in a slightly calmer political and social climate, Bradley once again challenged Yorty and this time succeeded because “he had the rare ability to reassure and comfort ... all the city’s contesting groups.”⁷ Bradley became the first African American mayor of a U.S. metropolitan city (following other African American mayoral pioneers in such cities as Cleveland, Gary, and Newark). His remarkable success at coalition-building was all the more striking because at the time of his election, Los Angeles was a majority white city at 59%, while blacks and Latinos made up approximately 18% each.⁸

The rise of Bradley’s biracial coalition signified a shift in L.A.’s civic power structures over a period of 20 years—from white male elites such as downtown businessmen and the Committee of 25 to a multiracial coalition of “liberals and minorities,” who up until the early 1960s were, “for the most part, excluded from power in a city that had been shaped by conservative white businessmen.”⁹ The small-town conservatism practiced by white elites in Los Angeles allowed local government officials to practice “fiscal stringency, strong support for the forces of order and reluctance to participate in federal social programs.”¹⁰ While business-led civic organizations played an important role in policymaking and planning, the exclusion of racial minorities in particular limited civic leaders’ effectiveness at addressing urban problems and social injustice. As Sonenshein notes, middle-class blacks and Jews lived in close proximity to each other in certain parts of the city and, united by “mutual interests and shared ideology,” rallied around Bradley to gain political power and enact change within local government.¹¹ In many ways, Chandler’s elite cultural coalition and Simons’s multiracial grassroots coalition helped pave the way for this political moment by opening spaces for increased civic participation of Jews and minorities. More significantly, this historic coalition marked a shift in black “factional politics” by uniting working-class blacks and the “progressive, upwardly mobile portion of the Los Angeles Black community long overshadowed by the party regulars.”¹² Some have called Bradley’s election a “remarkable political first in the history of race and politics in America.”¹³ Even more striking was how popular he was, and remained for nearly all of his time in office—evidence that Bradley’s calm manner and quiet strength captured the attention



The San Gabriel Valley city of Monterey Park, named an All-America City by the National Civic League in 1985 during a period of rapid ethnic diversification, was home to one of America's first Filipino-American elected officials, City Councilmember and Mayor Gonzalo Monty Manibog, as well as the first female Chinese-American mayor in the United States, Lily Lee Chen. This undated photograph from the early 1980s shows a swearing-in ceremony for Pauline Lemar, David Almada, Chen, and Rudy Peralta, as Manibog and George Westphaln look on. Courtesy Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library.

and support of Angelenos. Bradley's multiracial coalition was "the most durable and significant in American modern history" until President Obama was elected in 2008. His biographers argue that Bradley's election to mayor "opened up a new future for race relations," not only in Los Angeles, but "nationwide."¹⁴ And although Bradley's initial coalition was primarily a black-white alliance, over the following two decades it morphed into a multiracial coalition that included Latinos and Asian Americans.¹⁵

During his tenure as mayor, Bradley oversaw the transformation of Los Angeles into what he called a "world-class city," a place with glittering skyscrapers, a striking new skyline and a vibrant downtown.¹⁶ The transformation began in the 1950s through federal and local redevelopment policy, but Bradley took it to a new level in which L.A. became an international center of trade and a leader in urban environmentalism. Initially, downtown business leaders opposed Bradley, but the mayor eventually won them over by rallying the business community to support a 1974 downtown redevelopment plan that would revitalize local financial and business districts. His belief in business prosperity as the key to a healthy economy and high employment

rates aided the project to create business hubs in Century City and at Warner Center in Woodland Hills. Bradley is widely credited with transforming L.A. into "one of the most diversified and important cities in the world."¹⁷ His administration also expanded the diversity of City Hall employees, specifically women, minorities, and people with disabilities. Bradley's major achievements include the expansion of Los Angeles International Airport; signing a number of groundbreaking civil rights bills, including the 1979 gay rights bill and 1985 anti-AIDS discrimination bill; overseeing the city's bicentennial (1983); and lastly, bringing the 1984 Summer Olympics to Los Angeles, widely considered his crowning achievement, in part because it was the most financially successful Olympics to date.¹⁸ One of Bradley's most enduring legacies is the construction of light rail, which paved the way for a mass transit system that would eventually crisscross metropolitan Los Angeles.¹⁹

Bradley's term also witnessed the election of the first Chinese American member of the Los Angeles City Council—indeed the first Asian American—Michael Woo, in 1985. Japanese American actor and activist George Takei had run unsuccessfully in 1973, and Woo's

landslide win came on his second try.²⁰ Woo's victory (13th District) was particularly striking because the city's Asian population in 1985 stood at 6 percent, while in his own district it was less than 5 percent. Woo was said to have won his council seat in part because of a "growing recognition by politicians in California that the Asian constituency is becoming an important force in California politics." In the wake of the ascendancy a year earlier of Los Angeles County's first Chinese American mayor, Monterey Park's Lily Lee Chen, Woo's Los Angeles City Council victory was touted as a groundbreaking moment for all Asian Americans interested in politics.²¹ The political ascent of Asian American Angelenos paralleled the emergence of a new Japanese American civic center in Little Tokyo, anchored by the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), which opened in 1992. JANM's mission is to preserve the history and culture of Japanese Americans, and it chronicles Japanese immigrants in the U.S. JANM was funded in large part by a 1985 bill passed in the California state legislature, in acknowledgement of the "social, cultural and economic" contributions made in California by Japanese Americans. The bill required the City of Los Angeles to match the funds, which it did to the tune of \$1 million.²² The museum also received funding from Japanese Americans via reparations payments resulting from the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.²³ Michael Woo's Los Angeles City Council victory and the opening of JANM were in fact long-overdue manifestations of Asian American political activism. As a recent exhibition at the Chinese American Museum in downtown Los Angeles argues, "Asian American identity has always been political." The exhibition chronicles the history of pan-Asian American activism beginning in the 1960s, from Filipino farm workers negotiating alongside Cesar Chavez to the story of college students forming on-campus civil rights organizations across California.²⁴ What is most striking about the Asian American movement in Los Angeles was its broad commitment to intersectional Asian identity and its solidarity with multiracial social justice activists during a socially and politically volatile period that overlapped with Bradley's time in office.

In fact, Bradley's administration weathered major challenges that would eventually unravel his coalition, bookended by economic decline in the 1970s and early 1990s.²⁵ These challenges included a school busing crisis, continued police brutality despite the enactment of major LAPD reforms, and the growth of homelessness, crack cocaine use, and gang activity. These problems were aggravated by the region's diffuse power structures amidst a changing political climate. Bradley firmly believed that business

prosperity and a revitalized downtown would benefit the entire city and generate jobs, but the increase in foreign investment meant diminished corporate interest in civic engagement and community life. Worsening traffic congestion, air pollution, and Santa Monica Bay pollution also plagued his administration. The final collapse of Bradley's coalition arrived with the 1992 civil unrest after four white police officers were acquitted of all charges pertaining to the spring 1991 videotaped beating of Rodney King. The civil unrest would shatter "the illusion that a black mayor could end inequality and hopelessness." Bradley would retire in 1993, rather than seek a sixth term.²⁶

Retirement notwithstanding, the events of the era and the mayor himself left behind legacies of deep change. In the wake of the Rodney King beating, Bradley formed an independent commission to investigate policing practices of the Los Angeles Police Department. Known as the Christopher Commission, as it was chaired by attorney and diplomat Warren Christopher, the Commission produced a report that excoriated the LAPD for long-standing police brutality and use of force. The Commission's findings, both of the excessive violence and of the LAPD's entrenched unwillingness to launch appropriate investigations of officers and police culture, led to significant and lasting change. Civilian oversight of the LAPD, in the form of the Los Angeles Police Commission, was shored up significantly, and LAPD internal practices were made subject to much closer scrutiny and consequences by way of the LAPD Inspector General's office and other mechanisms.²⁷ Nothing in the long history of the Los Angeles Police Department has had the kind of impact of these reforms; they have remade the department, its culture, and its accountability.

In this and other, less significant ways, Tom Bradley's tenure as mayor encapsulated major changes in the local power structure, adding to and changing the nature of the diffusion, rather than consolidating it. As historian Kevin Starr put it, Bradley was "a prism through which we can see both the rise of Los Angeles as an international city and the reemergence of a vibrant black community... His mayoralty was a time in which Los Angeles reconfigured itself, redefined itself."²⁸ By the end of his time in office, the city government had to contend with increasingly powerful interest groups—developers, unions, and community groups, such as neighborhood associations. This period also signified a change in public-private partnerships that aimed to be more inclusive, driven by shifting demographics and sometimes polarizing racial politics. Up until the early 1960s, public-private partnerships that encompassed regional solutions to civic problems



Mayor Tom Bradley takes an escalator at the January 30, 1993, opening of the Red Line subway downtown. One of Bradley's most enduring legacies was the construction of a light rail mass transit network, which catalyzed a new system—in many places using old Pacific Electric rights of way—that once again would crisscross metropolitan Los Angeles. Courtesy Los Angeles Public Library.

were typically successful, aided by the tightly held reins of elite, white civic leaders with narrow interests. As their power faded, and as civic initiatives became more socio-economically and racially diverse, the ability to achieve civic goals became more difficult. Bradley's success in luring greater foreign investment in the Los Angeles economy further complicated any sense of community and civic investment from business leaders across the region and limited his ability to "harness the power of the private sector" to solve civic problems.²⁹

The decision to rely on private-sector investment to rebuild central Los Angeles after the 1992 civil unrest provides a glaring example of how collaboration and public-private partnerships limited, rather than achieved, any tangible success. In the aftermath of the civil unrest, Mayor Bradley established Rebuild LA, "a public-private coalition officially designated 'an extra-governmental task force,'" which according to Kevin Starr was "separate from city government—but not, as it turned out, from city politics."³⁰ While Rebuild LA is widely seen as a failure, the story of its impact is much more complex in that several important civic initiatives emerged precisely because of its failure. In fact, multiple efforts to put the city back together tell a story in which

the shared trauma of this moment triggered grassroots collaboration that gave birth to several nonprofits and to a renewed focus on leadership. It demonstrated that during a time of seemingly little progress, changes in the power structure and the ability of ordinary folks to get things done were percolating under the surface.

The goal of Rebuild LA was to harness the power of the private sector to replace and improve on what was lost in the 1992 turmoil of civil unrest.³¹ Bradley tapped former Major League Baseball Commissioner Peter Ueberroth to head the organization. Ueberroth was a multimillionaire who had successfully overseen the first privately financed Olympic Games in L.A. in 1984, producing a \$215 million surplus, with the added bonus of "bringing to Los Angeles a triumphant sense of having arrived as a world city." In 1984, *Time* magazine named him Man of the Year. In 1991, Ueberroth led Governor Pete Wilson's Council on California Competitiveness, which created a successful economic recovery plan for the state.³² In other words, Ueberroth was a well-respected and brilliantly successful leader who appeared a natural choice to lead the area's recovery.

Rebuild LA was a five-year economic development program that brokered partnerships between



African American community activists, led by Karen Bass, then an emergency-room physicians assistant, founded the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, to organize against criminalization of substance addiction and to end the proliferation of nuisance liquor stores and motels in South Central Los Angeles (now South L.A.). The Community Coalition has seen two of its leaders move into public office: Bass became the 67th Speaker of the California State Assembly and subsequently was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, and her successor as executive director, Marqueese Harris-Dawson, was elected to the Los Angeles City Council. Courtesy Karen Bass.

community, government, and private-sector businesses aimed at job creation through redevelopment. Initially, the organization created hope that the private sector could solve problems where the public sector had failed, but it was later seen as a massive disappointment that would “repeatedly overpromise and underachieve.” The chief critiques are that the organization sought to complete its work in too short a period and that changes in city and county government worked to undermine the organization’s specific goals.³³ Starr argues that the organization was almost immediately “in danger of being torn apart by the same ethnic tensions that had recently destroyed large portions of the city,” in part because the Korean, African American, and Latino communities most affected by the civil unrest each demanded a large stake. The board of directors charged with policymaking had swelled to 80 members, which crippled its effectiveness.³⁴ The board was also an example of how often Angelenos relied on corporate leadership with a charismatic figure at the helm to come up with civic solutions. But by the early 1990s, the loss of L.A.-based corporate headquarters contributed to the organization’s failure because there were few C-level executives to turn to for deep civic engagement or local corporate investment. Further, the organization was only able to secure under \$200 million in corporate pledges toward its goal of \$4 billion to \$6 billion needed to “create the 75,000–94,000

jobs necessary to stabilize the inner city.” The resulting internal turmoil, and the resignation of Ueberroth 13 months after its launch, muddled the organization’s mission and made it mostly ineffective.³⁵

Yet, by 2001, the local economy was booming, with Los Angeles County ranked 16th in the world.³⁶ If Rebuild LA was, at best, a qualified success, how did the economy recover? No large-scale private investments, especially the corporate pledges Ueberroth and Rebuild LA expected to count on for recovery, were responsible for the region’s economic revival by 2001. Rather, “a myriad of companies employing fewer than one hundred people were now responsible for half the jobs in the county: immigrant-run firms... doing business in new activities like textiles, toys, and high tech.” Starr notes, “corporate Los Angeles had virtually disappeared.”³⁷ What Rebuild LA failed to accomplish, the local community managed to achieve on its own, with no help from local government and virtually no public assistance. Despite its attempt at inclusivity, “Rebuild LA was a top-down organization in a city whose economic vitality was percolating from the bottom up, and whose entrepreneurs—so many of them recent immigrants—were deeply suspicious of government boards, even quasi-government boards, however well intended.” These local and immigrant-run businesses had no need for getting involved in such an effort when they were accomplishing its goals on their

own.³⁸ It is also an example of stakeholders not willing or able to hold the organization accountable, even if the community's needs were never fully considered. The economic activity of Latino immigrants in particular was a key part of the resurgence.³⁹ Thus, the unintended consequences of Rebuild LA's failure to harness private, corporate power was that it left a vacuum in which ordinary folks—immigrants, longtime residents, activists, and even City Council members—stepped in to lead the way toward recovery and rebuilding.

For example, African American community activists organized the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, targeted toward policy reform. The proliferation of liquor stores in South Central Los Angeles (now South L.A.) had long been a point of contention within the community because of high food prices and because the accessibility of an addictive substance damaged community health. In the aftermath of the civil unrest, the Community Coalition pressured the city to limit the issuance of conditional use permits and rebuilding permits, effectively preventing the majority of the 200 destroyed liquor stores from rebuilding. While their efforts did not solve the problem of disproportionately more liquor stores in the South L.A. community, the coalition contributed toward “significant policy in the realm of ‘social hazard’ zoning that have enhanced, however modestly, the quality of life.”⁴⁰

Also significant is the example of both a community response *and* a notable exception to the lack of large-scale investment from the University of Southern California (USC), a private institution with a \$1 billion annual budget and the “largest private employer in the city.” USC's campus, adjacent to the heart of the unrest, escaped any major damage in 1992. USC's recently appointed president, Steven Sample, made a commitment to renewed community engagement through the adoption of “neighborhood outreach as an essential premise” for USC's strategic plan. Within a decade Sample made good on his promises, with the help of dedicated faculty and staff. Among USC's ambitious programs: providing USC workers, mostly minorities, with down payments on neighborhood houses; offering scholarships to USC workers from kindergarten through high school, and for attendance to USC; \$1 million a year in local investments; and community safety programs. USC's efforts garnered a College of the Year title from *Time* magazine in 2000, in part because USC “had established a community relations and improvement program that *Time* considered a model for inner-city universities in challenged urban areas.”⁴¹

USC also played a significant role in supporting the ability of faith-based organizations to address urban problems after 1992, resulting in the eventual

establishment of the Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement. Initially, a USC sociology professor connected with Rev. Cecil Leonard Murray of the First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church of Los Angeles about the contributions of religious organizations to the revival of South L.A. The study spurred the establishment of the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC), gave birth to an annual conference on faith-based economic development, and led to the hiring of Murray after his retirement from FAME civic life. After a number of years actively studying and engaging with local religious communities as part of CRCC, USC launched the Cecil Murray Center in 2012 to create “an incubator and training center for faith-based institutions tackling the challenges of their communities.” The center provides civic engagement strategy programs, leadership mentoring, and a network of support for faith communities interested in actively pursuing social and economic progress.⁴²

One final flashpoint for changes in civic leadership was the campaign to save the downtown L.A. Central Library from destruction in the late 1970s. What began as an effort to stop destruction of a historically significant building became a siren call for preventing the erasure or destruction of Los Angeles's past. This galvanizing moment turned into a grassroots historic preservation movement, in which L.A. now leads the country. Los Angeles in fact became an early harbinger of preservation and adaptive reuse strategies that repudiated slash-and-burn urban renewal. The Los Angeles Conservancy is currently the largest historic preservation organization in the country. It is an example of how a nonprofit organization led the way toward change and helped create public policy by forcing the city to strengthen its commitment to preserving and protecting the history of Los Angeles, not only by saving historically or architecturally significant buildings but also by creating protective policies aimed at restoration and adaptive reuse. The conservancy promotes “a vision of Los Angeles as a place that values our past and considers it an essential part of our present and future.”⁴³ The grassroots activism aimed at rescuing an old building from destruction gave rise to a historic preservation movement that would become a model for other cities across the United States.

In the four decades since Bradley came to power, the multiracial alliances that held together his coalition have long since shifted and disintegrated. In particular, the black-Jewish alliance that upheld Bradley's coalition slowly frayed, complicated by shifting Democratic and progressive politics that came to include Latinos

and Asian Americans. Black-Latino relations also fizzled.⁴⁴ By the mid-1990s, it became clear that “a new constituency, the Latino community, was going to drive a transition to the next stage of Los Angeles politics.” The rise of Latino political activism grew out of an emphasis on organized labor, which helped expand Democratic alliances but also drove divisions between labor interests and business interests within the Democratic party, complicating any politician’s ability to hold together a majority.⁴⁵

However, the lessons from Bradley’s coalition politics were not lost on the city’s most recent mayors. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (2005-2013) applied the lessons of the Bradley Coalition in building his own powerful multiracial coalition of Westsiders and Latinos, as well as organized labor, to win election in 2005.⁴⁶ Mayor Eric Garcetti (elected 2013; re-elected to term ending 2022) likewise drew on the lessons of Bradley’s coalition by appealing to Villaraigosa’s Westside / Latino Eastside coalition, but also carried the traditionally white, Republican northwest San Fernando Valley in the 2013 mayoral race, albeit without the support of the black vote or labor. Garcetti became the city’s first elected Jewish mayor.⁴⁷

The impact of new progressive majorities cultivated by Villaraigosa and Garcetti can be seen in the relatively uneventful raising of the minimum wage and the emergent business/labor alliance supporting new policies and local tax revenues in transit, housing, and coal-reducing measures. Villaraigosa’s achievements for transit include getting Measure R passed, lobbying for federal transportation dollars, and supporting rezoning and entitlements along transportation corridors. He noted that the “vision behind Measure R wasn’t just to double the size of the rail system... it was also to reimagine the city” by building along transportation lines and changing ridership habits.⁴⁸ Garcetti likewise has masterfully built a new progressive majority, perhaps best exemplified by two-thirds voter approval in the fall of 2016 of two new tax measures, Measure M and Proposition HHH, both championed by Garcetti, to provide additional funding to expand transit and build housing for the homeless—two of the region’s most pressing problems.⁴⁹

One of Bradley’s lasting legacies is the continued diversity of economic development in the metropolitan region, particularly with the growth of tech industries in Pasadena and Santa Monica. Also worth noting is the actualization of a downtown development boom, represented by the proliferation of restaurants, shops, cultural and leisure spaces, and high-rise hotels and apartments, as well as the adaptive reuse of existing

structures into work/play/live spaces. But with steadily growing economic resurgence and the revitalization of specific neighborhoods have come the negative effects of gentrification. Much of this development, for lack of a better word, has created tension and conflict between government officials, residents, developers, landlords, and small-business owners.

For example, efforts to revitalize the Los Angeles River have raised the complex issue of gentrification for neighborhoods bordering the river. The working-class, mostly Latino neighborhood known as Frogtown—which runs from trendy Atwater Village to downtown—has been the most vocal and contentious example of how the River project has the potential to destroy neighborhood character, rather than revitalize and improve the lives of residents. The expected \$1 billion investment has created “an incredible surge” in developer interest because river-adjacent neighborhoods are expected to become more attractive places to live. With the urging of Frogtown residents, the City of Los Angeles took some steps in 2015 to slow the frenzy of interest to some extent, in the form of zoning changes that cap building heights at two stories and limit the size of buildings to 60 percent of the lot. Displacement, as current residents get priced out of the neighborhood, has long been a concern for Frogtown residents, who regularly receive inquiries regarding selling their once-undesirable properties to developers who want to rebuild or evict current residents and raise rents.⁵⁰ Still, Frogtown residents have already been affected by increasing rent costs, and at least half of the neighborhood’s riverfront properties have been sold in the last few years at higher sale prices. Some low-income residents bordering the river feel they “are being pushed aside for more monied interests” and question the public-spirited nature of a redesign occurring behind closed doors, despite years of community input.⁵¹ In this—even with its “grand” regional vision⁵²—the efforts parallel earlier civic initiatives of the past, created as “an entrepreneurial organization that can work across the public, private, and philanthropic sectors’ and ... filled with ... ‘real-estate developers, lawyers,’” studio executives, and scions of elite families, and interdependent with government and commercial interests. As housing pressures and gentrification unfold, questions remain about trust and economic inclusion.⁵³ The complexity of revitalizing the river in a way that accomplishes shared sustainability, economic, and tourism goals without ignoring the needs and equity concerns of local residents and neighborhoods is indicative of the broader challenges facing Los Angeles civic leadership today.

Further Reading:

"About the LA River." City of Los Angeles: Los Angeles River Revitalization. <http://lariver.org/blog/about-la-river> (accessed Jun 5, 2017).

Boyarsky, Bill. "Will the Tattered Bradley Coalition Fade Into History?" *Los Angeles Times* (May 23, 1993).

Finnegan, Michael, and Ben Welsh. "The Road to Eric Garcetti's Election Romp." *Los Angeles Times* (May 22, 2013).

Finnegan, Michael, Samantha Schaefer, and Abby Sewell. "Non-drivers hog the road at 6th and biggest CicLAvia." *Los Angeles Times* (Apr 22, 2013).

Fritsch, Jane. "Tom Bradley, Mayor in Era of Los Angeles Growth, Dies." *New York Times* (Sep 30, 1998).

Gazzar, Brenda. "CicLAvia draws thousands of cyclists, pedestrians to iconic Wilshire Boulevard." *Los Angeles Daily News* (Apr 6, 2014).

Gettell, Oliver. "L.A. Film Festival: 'Bridging the Divide' a timely look at Tom Bradley's legacy." *Los Angeles Times* (Jun 13, 2015).

Goldfarb, Lyn, and Alison Sotomayor. "Tom Bradley Biography." Documentary: Bridging the Divide: Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race (2016). <http://www.mayortombradley.com/biography> (accessed May 4, 2017).

Gottlieb, Robert, Mark Vallianatos, Regina M. Freer, and Peter Dreier. *The Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Hanson, Royce, Hal Wolman, David Connolly, and Katherine Pearson. "Corporate Citizenship and Urban Problem Solving: The Changing Civic Role of Business Leaders in American Cities." The George Washington Institute of Public Policy, Sep 2006.

"Interview: Antonio Villaraigosa Reflects on Past as he Charts Future." *Los Angeles Times* (Jul 10, 2013).

Jennings, Angel. "He tried to cool a city's anger, only to watch helplessly as it burned during the 1992 riots." *Los Angeles Times* (Apr 28, 2017).

Kreitner, Richard. "Will the Los Angeles River Become a Playground for the Rich?" *The Nation* (Mar 10, 2016).

LA 2000 Committee. *LA 2000: A City for the Future*. Los Angeles: LA 2000 Committee, 1988.

"L.A. Metro's New 'Complete Streets' Policy Gains National Recognition." Metro.net (Feb 10, 2015). https://www.metro.net/news/simple_pr/l-metros-new-complete-streets-policy-gains-national/ (accessed Jun 7, 2017).

Maddaus, Gene. "Eric Garcetti Wins Mayor's Race By Rebuilding the Villaraigosa Coalition, Plus San Fernando Valley Republicans." *LA Weekly* (May 22, 2013).

Merl, Jean, and Bill Boyarsky. "Mayor Who Reshaped L.A. Dies." *Los Angeles Times* (Sep 30, 1998).

Ong, Paul, Theresa Firestine, Deirdre Pfeiffer, Oiyen Poon, and Linda Tran. *The State of South LA*. Los Angeles: UCLA School of Public Affairs, 2008.

"Our History." CicLAvia.org. <http://www.ciclavia.org/history> (accessed May 25, 2017).

"Our History." Friends of the Los Angeles River. <https://folar.org/our-legacy/#history> (accessed Jun 5, 2017).

"Our Mission." CicLAvia.org. http://www.ciclavia.org/ciclavia_mission (accessed May 25, 2017).

"Rebuilding LA's Urban Communities: A Final Report from RLA." Milken Institute, Jan 1, 1997.

Sides, Josh. "20 Years Later: Legacies of the Los Angeles Riots." *Places Journal* (Apr 2012). <https://doi.org/10.22269/120419> (accessed Jun 4, 2017).

Smith, Dakota. "Success of homelessness and transit measures could give L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti a boost." *Los Angeles Times* (Nov 10, 2016).

Sonenshein, Raphael J. *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Sonenshein, Raphael J. "In Tom Bradley's Shadow." *Los Angeles Times* (May 25, 2008).

Sonenshein, Raphael J. "What kind of Democrat will prevail in Los Angeles 3rd District County race?" *Jewish Journal* (Oct 31, 2014). http://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/134527/ (accessed July 20, 2017).

"Time / Princeton Review selects USC as College of the Year." USC News (Sep 24, 1999). <https://news.usc.edu/8466/Time-Princeton-Review-selects-USC-as-College-of-the-Year/> (accessed May 5, 2017).

Trinidad, Elson. "May 1973: Tom Bradley Elected L.A. Mayor; 1st Black Mayor of a Major U.S. City." KCET 50th Anniversary (Sep 16, 2014). <https://www.kcet.org/kcet-50th-anniversary/may-1973-tom-bradley-elected-la-mayor-1st-black-mayor-of-a-major-us-city> (accessed Mar 7, 2017).

Wagley, Catherine. "Tom Bradley's Los Angeles." *HUMANITIES* 37:1 (Jan/Feb 2016).

¹ Bill Boyarsky, "Will the Tattered Bradley Coalition Fade Into History?" *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1993.

² Elson Trinidad, "May 1973: Tom Bradley Elected L.A. Mayor; 1st Black Mayor of a Major U.S. City," KCET 50th Anniversary, Sep 16, 2014, <https://www.kcet.org/kcet-50th-anniversary/may-1973-tom-bradley-elected-la-mayor-1st-black-mayor-of-a-major-us-city> (accessed Mar 7, 2017); Lyn Goldfarb and Alison Sotomayor, "Tom Bradley Biography," Documentary: Bridging the Divide: Tom Bradley and the Politics of Race (2016), <http://www.mayortombradley.com/biography> (accessed May 4, 2017); Boyarsky, "Will the Tattered Bradley Coalition Fade Into History?" Bradley's support also came from African American church leaders.

³ Boyarsky, "Will the Tattered Bradley Coalition Fade Into History?" Bradley's coalition included now-Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

⁴ Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 55.

⁵ "Tom Bradley Biography."

⁶ *Ibid.* Bradley won the primary, but lost in the runoff with Yorty, who waged a racist campaign that portrayed Bradley as "anti-police."

⁷ Boyarsky, "Will the Tattered Bradley Coalition Fade Into History?" Boyarsky notes that Jews had traditionally been excluded from political power in Los Angeles, which was certainly evidenced by the Music Center fundraising campaign during the early 1960s.

⁸ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, Table 6.1, 87.

⁹ "Tom Bradley Biography."

¹⁰ Boyarsky, "Will the Tattered Bradley Coalition Fade Into History?"

¹¹ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, 139.

¹² *Ibid.*, 114.

¹³ Jennifer Robinson, "Bridging The Divide: Tom Bradley and The Politics of Race," KPBS.org, Jun 6, 2016, <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2016/jun/06/bridging-divide-tom-bradley-and-politics-race/> (accessed May 15, 2017).

¹⁴ "Tom Bradley Biography."

¹⁵ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, xvi.

¹⁶ Jane Fritsch, "Tom Bradley, Mayor in Era Of Los Angeles Growth, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 30, 1998.

¹⁷ "Tom Bradley Biography."

¹⁸ Trinidad, "May 1973: Tom Bradley Elected L.A. Mayor"; "Tom Bradley Biography."

¹⁹ Kevin Starr, *Coast of Dreams: California On the Edge, 1990-2003* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 548-552. See also Ryan Reft, "A Clear Blue Vision: L.A. Light Rail Transit and Twenty Five Years of the Blue Line," KCET History & Society, Feb 26, 2015, <https://www.kcet.org/history-society/a-clear-blue-vision-la-light-rail-transit-and-twenty-five-years-of-the-blue-line> (accessed May 20, 2017); "African-American Trailblazer, Los Angeles Political Legend: Tom Bradley, UCLA 1937-1940," UCLA: The Optimists, <http://www.ucla.edu/optimists/biographies/bradley> (accessed May 1, 2017).

²⁰ Korean American David Ryu was elected to the L.A. City Council in 2015, representing the 4th District. He is the first Korean American to serve on the Council, and only the second Asian American.

²¹ Frank Clifford, "Woo's Victory—Asians Come of Political Age," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 6, 1985. During his time in office, Woo worked with Bradley on light-rail legislation. See Richard Simon, "Bradley, Woo to Write 'Pro' Light-Rail Ballot Argument," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 9, 1988.

²² The commercial heart of Little Tokyo surrounding JANM is now the Little Tokyo Historic District, a National Historic Landmark. See "Little Tokyo Historic District: Los Angeles, California," National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/Asian_American_and_Pacific_Islander_Heritage/Little-Tokyo-Historic-District.htm (accessed Aug 7, 2017); "About JANM," Japanese American National Museum, <http://www.janm.org/about/history/> (accessed Aug 7, 2017).

²³ Pablo De Greiff, ed., *The Handbook of Reparations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 276; "Historical Documents: Civil Liberties Act of 1988," Children of the Camps: Internment History, PBS Social, <https://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history/civilact.html> (accessed August 7, 2017). Japanese Americans received \$20,000 each in reparations payments.

²⁴ Frank Shyong, "Before Asian Americans could be 'woke,' they had to shed the 'Oriental' label," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 26, 2017; Lilian Min, "What Today's Protesters Can Learn From the History of L.A.'s Asian-American Movement," *LA Weekly*, Jan 24, 2017.

²⁵ Hillel Aron, "Who Runs Los Angeles? A Search for Today's Power Brokers," in: *Under the Influence* (USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism), <http://usc.news21.com/hillel-story/introduction-home-page> (accessed Nov 7, 2016).

²⁶ "Tom Bradley Biography." The decrease in local corporate investment in cities occurred across the country as major businesses became merely branches of larger, distant corporations. See Royce Hanson, Hal Wolman, David Connolly, and Katherine Pearson, "Corporate Citizenship and Urban Problem Solving: The Changing Civic Role of Business Leaders in American Cities," The George Washington Institute of Public Policy, Sep 2006, 13.

²⁷ Raphael J. Sonenshein, "Coalition Building in Los Angeles: The Bradley Years and Beyond," in Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2001), 457.

²⁸ Starr quotation taken from Jean Merl and Bill Boyarsky, "Mayor Who Reshaped L.A. Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 30, 1998.

- ²⁹ Josh Sides, “20 Years Later: Legacies of the Los Angeles Riots,” *Places Journal* (Apr 2012), <https://doi.org/10.22269/120419> (accessed Jun 4, 2017).
- ³⁰ Starr, *Coast of Dreams*, 394.
- ³¹ It is worth noting that the terms “civil unrest” and “riot” in reference to the 1992 disturbances are contested terms in a welter of contested terminology, and are an indication that language diffusion and mutual (non-)comprehension can be a severe barrier to effective civic leadership. The use of “civil unrest” in this report is thus a deliberate choice. Using the term “riot” denotes that the six-day disturbance was rooted in violence and crime endemic to South Central Los Angeles (now known as South Los Angeles) absent of any meaningful purpose, while the terms “civil unrest,” “disturbance,” and “uprising” do better to recognize the deeper contexts to the protests following the unjust Rodney King beating verdicts, which ignited long-simmering resentment of police brutality and social injustice. African American Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA) remarked that the uprising “was somewhat understandable, if not acceptable. So I call it a rebellion.” Certainly, race, geography, and audience influence language choices, as seen during local political campaigns during the 1990s. For more on this debate, see Hillel Aron, “Should We Still Call Them the L.A. Riots?” *LA Weekly*, April 15, 2017 (<http://www.laweekly.com/news/what-is-the-correct-term-for-the-1992-la-riots-8130969>). The California African American Museum’s (CAAM) 2017 exhibition “No Justice, No Peace: LA 1992” deliberately refers to it as the “LA uprising” and notes that “decades of complex socio-political history” contributed to “underlying tensions among Los Angeles’ marginalized groups and communities.” See the CAAM website (http://www.caamuseum.org/web_pages/current_exhibitions_la1992.htm). For an example of how the use of language can transform our understanding of historical events such as the 1992 civil unrest, see “Rebuilding the American Dream, Together,” Saigu Campaign, April 29, 2017 (<https://saigu429.squarespace.com/>).
- ³² Starr, *Coast of Dreams*, 394-395.
- ³³ Sides, “20 Years Later.”
- ³⁴ Starr, *Coast of Dreams*, 395.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 395-396.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 396.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 395-396.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 397.
- ³⁹ Sides, “20 Years Later.”
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* The Community Coalition was in existence prior to the 1992 riots, but stepped up its efforts afterward.
- ⁴¹ Starr, *Coast of Dreams*, 398.
- ⁴² “About the Center,” USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture, <https://crcc.usc.edu/events-and-training/murraycenter/about/> (accessed May 25, 2017).
- ⁴³ “About,” Los Angeles Conservancy, <https://www.laconservancy.org/about> (accessed May 25, 2017).
- ⁴⁴ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, xvi.
- ⁴⁵ Raphael J. Sonenshein, “What kind of Democrat will prevail in Los Angeles 3rd District County race?” *Jewish Journal*, Oct 31, 2014, http://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/134527/ (accessed July 20, 2017).
- ⁴⁶ “Interview: Antonio Villaraigosa Reflects on Past as he Charts Future,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 10, 2013; Gene Maddaus, “Eric Garcetti Wins Mayor’s Race By Rebuilding the Villaraigosa Coalition, Plus San Fernando Valley Republicans,” *LA Weekly*, May 22, 2013.
- ⁴⁷ Maddaus, “Eric Garcetti Wins Mayor’s Race”; Michael Finnegan and Ben Welsh, “The Road to Eric Garcetti’s Election Romp,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 2013; Sonenshein, “What kind of Democrat will prevail in Los Angeles 3rd District County race?”
- ⁴⁸ “Interview: Antonio Villaraigosa Reflects on Past as he Charts Future.”
- ⁴⁹ Dakota Smith, “Success of homelessness and transit measures could give L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti a boost,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 10, 2016.
- ⁵⁰ Bianca Barragan, “City Helping Frogtown Put the Brakes on the Development ‘Feeding Frenzy’ Along the LA River,” *Curbed Los Angeles*, Aug 14, 2015.
- ⁵¹ Bianca Barragan, “Whoa: Frank Gehry’s Working on a Master Plan to Revitalize the LA River,” *Curbed Los Angeles*, Aug 7, 2015; Adrian Glick Kudler, “How the Elite Have Co-Opted the Future of the LA River,” *Curbed Los Angeles*, Mar 14, 2016; Elijah Chiland, “Trendy tenants moving into new Frogtown mixed user,” *Curbed Los Angeles*, Jan 4, 2017; Elijah Chiland, “The 20-year-old LA River Master Plan is getting an update,” *Curbed Los Angeles*, Oct 18, 2016.
- ⁵² Kudler, “How the Elite Have Co-Opted the Future of the LA River.”
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*; Richard Kreitner, “Will the Los Angeles River Become a Playground for the Rich?” *The Nation*, Mar 10, 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research for and publication of *Space to Lead: A Century of Civic Leadership in Los Angeles* were made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Knight Foundation through its Community and National Initiatives, then under the direction of Carol Coletta. FOC:LA wishes to thank the Southern California Leadership Network, Nancy Olson, and Erin Tanenbaum for co-hosting a convening of current and former leaders of civic leadership development initiatives from across Los Angeles County to review early research findings; participants included Shanel Melamed (30 Years After), Shelby Williams-Gonzalez (Arts for LA), Joellyn Weingourt (Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice), Raphael Sonenshein (Cal State LA Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs); Lindsey Hiroko Horowitz (Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment: CAUSE), Margaret Madden and Francisco Rodriguez (City of Long Beach Neighborhood Leadership Program), Claire Peeps (Durfee Foundation), Hyepin Im (KCCD/FACE), John Glaza (Leadership Long Beach), Cindy Bengston (Leadership Pasadena), Joanna Kabat (Liberty Hill Foundation), Abby J. Leibman (Jewish Federation New Leaders Project), Joel Frost-Tift and Nora Gilbert (New Leaders Council Los Angeles), and Najuma Smith-Pollard (USC Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement). The authors extend their deep appreciation to Eric Avila, Nishith Bhatt, Maria Cabildo, Kelly Lytle Hernández, Alice O'Connor, Bill Parent, Manuel Pastor, Nancy Olson, Karthick Ramakrishnan, Raphael Sonenshein, and Beatina Theopold, who reviewed earlier versions of this report. They thank as well Erin Chase, Terri Garst, Taryn Haydostian, Elizabeth Logan, and Brian Moeller for their assistance with photograph selection and preparation.

How to Cite this Report

Andrea Thabet, Shawn Landres, and William Deverell. *Space to Lead: A Century of Civic Leadership in Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: Future of Cities: Los Angeles and the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, 2017.

Disclaimer

Unless expressly stated otherwise, the findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the views of Future of Cities: Los Angeles or the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West.

Copyright notice

©2017 Future of Cities: Los Angeles and the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West. All rights reserved. This report may not be reposted or mirrored online without the express permission of Future of Cities: Los Angeles and the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West. This single copy of the report is for your personal use only. Professional or commercial use is prohibited except by express permission.

Project Management: Stephanie Avedon

Copyediting: Sally Fay

Information Design: Hershey Cause Communications

Report Design & Production: Mike Ross

