The Promotion of Livable Neighborhoods within the Los Angeles Planning Process

A Look at Highland Park and the Ave. 57 Specific Plan

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I. The Value of Cities and the Notion of Livability

Cities offer two distinct assets in that they are densely populated and have the ability to mix people and activities in close proximity. At their best, cities make travel more efficient and less harmful to the environment and facilitate social interaction among residents. With their dense neighborhoods and vast network of public services, cities have the potential to not only act to nurture cultural development, but also present a more efficient and sustainable model for growth. Yet, over most of the past century we have neglected our cities to the point that we have destroyed their functionality through policies that "favored sprawl over density and conformity over difference. Such policies have caused many of our urban centers to devolve into generic theme parks and others, like Detroit, to decay into ghost towns. They have also sparked the rise of ecologically unsustainable gated communities and reinforced disparities by building walls between racial, ethnic and class groups."[i]

Correcting these ills, and, as the great urbanist Lewis Mumford writes, restoring the city to its role as not only "a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process" but also a "theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity," will a require a radical adjustment in our approach to urban development. It demands that we reflect and learn from the largely failed urban policies of the past century in order to plan for a more sustainable, livable, and equitable urban future. However, the goal in creating livable cities is not the establishment of a utopian model but rather an application of ideas

that promote the widest opportunity for equitable public, social, and community life. As Patrick Geddes wrote, "Civics as an art has to do, not with imaging an impossible [utopia] where all is well, but with making the most and best of each and every place, and especially of the city in which we live."[ii] Though there is no single tactic or policy that will solve our urban problems, there are many that, when addressed as part of a coordinated effort, could serve as an outline for creating more livable and sustainable cities.

Yet, in order to plan for this type of equitable development it is necessary to first acknowledge the value of urban centers for societal improvement and define exactly what principles make up this notion of livability. At the start of the post-war era in 1945 American cities, unlike their European counterparts, were fortunate to have been spared the destruction and devastation of the war. Yet, in the following years, immense harm was inflicted upon the urban environment by misguided urban renewal policies, zoning policies, and the construction of large-scale, single purpose, commercial centers. When this damage appeared to be irreparable many politicians and officials claimed that it marked the end of the city in terms of its traditional functions and instead represented a new era of rapid economic and technological improvement. Still, this approach merely turned a blind eye to the ills of urban society, ignoring the basic needs of their most disenfranchised residents and lowering the overall quality of life in these areas. The idea of the livable city, as developed in this paper, works to combat these very problems and to restore the heart of the city and its neighborhood centers not only for commercial and economic activity, but also for the revival and renewal of the essential social

processes traditionally embedded, but increasingly absent from the urban realm. Suzanne and Henry Lennard argue that there is a certain comfort and security that arises from social contacts that are gratifying and enjoyable, that confirm persons as both individuals and as members of a community. “A livable city provides occasions and places for such good experiences.”[iii]

The idea of a livable city is by no means a contemporary innovation and is actually grounded in the traditional model of the European village and hamlet. However, as American cities became more and more harmed by misguided urban policies the appeal of the urban center as a driving force of equitable social and economic vitality was somehow lost along the way. Kevin Lynch expressed the sentiment of this lost civic ideal in this passage:

> A beautiful and delightful city environment is an oddity, some would say an impossibility. Not one American city larger than a village is of consistently fine quality, although a few towns have some pleasant fragments. It is hardly surprising then, that most Americans have little idea of what it can mean to live in such an environment. They are clear enough about the ugliness of the smoke, the heat, and the congestion, the chaos and yet the monotony of it. But they are hardly aware of the potential value of harmonious surroundings, a world which they may have briefly glimpsed only as tourists or as escaped vacationers. They can have little sense of what a setting can mean in terms of daily delight, or as a continuous anchor for their lives, or as an extension of the meaningfulness and richness of the world.[iv]

American cities increasingly lack a shared sense of place or civic identity that can relate to the average resident. Today, as Joel Kotkin argues, most major cities attract tourists and upper-class populations employed in high-end business services in addition to the “nomadic youth” who most often later move on to other locales. “This increasingly ephemeral city seems to places its highest values on such transient values as hipness, coolness, artfulness, and fashionability. These

characteristics, however appealing in their aspect, cannot substitute for the critical, longer-lasting bonds of family, faith, civic culture, and neighborhood. Nor can a narrow transactional or recreational economy play the same role as one based on a broad diversity of industries."[v] Thus, it is imperative that we focus on restoring the neighborhood ideal as a means to create more livable and equitable cities that maintain stability while offering low-income families a chance at upward mobility.

The argument for neighborhood based planning and development stems from the fact that these types of programs generally are more responsive to local characteristics, wishes, and problems and therefore, "may get more people involved in planning activities; generally result in more physical improvements actually being made; help strengthen communities through the increased interaction for those people involved in the plan; help leaders become more involved in citywide affairs; often lead to a fairer distribution of public resources; and may increase citizen access to and trust of local government.[vi]"

As Mumford somewhat prophetically wrote in 1961, "The old separation of man and nature, of townsman and countryman, of Greek and barbarian, of citizen and foreigner, can no longer be maintained: for communication, the entire planet is becoming a village; and as a result, the smallest neighborhood or precinct must be planned as a working model of the larger world. The individual and corporate will of its citizens, aiming at self-knowledge, self-government, and self-actualization must be embodied in the city. Not industry but education will be the center of their activities."[vii] Here Mumford predicted an all too familiar truth; we now live in an age of globalization and in order to create a more livable, sustainable, and equitable

world, we must take a bottom up approach and focus first on the neighborhood, then the district, the city, the region and so forth as a working model for livable communities. It is an approach which demands that we adopt a wiser method of neighborhood development, "one that respects the historic function of cities, the systemic connection between urban forms and social processes, and the need to involve all city dwellers, from experts to community members, in decision making"[viii] The case study presented in this paper will demonstrate one locality's approach towards neighborhood development and evaluate its progress towards promoting this concept of more livable communities.

The idea of the livable city supports the claims of Lewis Mumford who described the urban environment as a "humanizing force" for those who reside in it. Livable cities provide diverse groups of people the opportunity to partake in the urban experience once again by promoting an infrastructure of services, varied housing options, and work opportunities in close proximity. Additionally, they enable a range of prospects for social interaction, discourse, and meaningful community dialogue, which in turn creates a self-equilibrating system of "resolving inevitable tensions among groups and individuals."[ix]

As Mumford wrote, for the city to meet its traditional role as a promoter of diverse human interaction and cultural transmission it must "permit and, indeed, encourage—the greatest possible number of meetings, encounters, challenges, between varies persons and groups."[x] Most American cities do not afford this interaction between their residents, and in some cases actively discourage it through the separation of residential, commercial and employment activities, the

physical division of neighborhoods by freeways and highways, and the construction of buildings without any connection or relation to each other, or the greater city as a whole. “The relation between the physical and social disorganization of city life—indifference, alienation, brutalization of human relationships” has become appallingly evident in our urban centers.[xi]

Mumford long ago championed the importance of social and economic mixing stating that, “A plan that does not further a daily intermixture of people, classes, activities, works against the best interests of maturity.”[xii] He and Geddes both viewed cities as a necessary way to accommodate “the essential human need for disharmony and conflict.”[xiii] Victor Gruen echoed these sentiments as he stated, “The city for some is loneliness at times, and a social whirl at other times. In the city there is the struggle for power and for wealth, but also the striving for knowledge, for self-expression; there is love and there is hate, because the city is a mirror of everything human.”[xiv] It is clear that these scholars viewed a mix of the social and economic realm as genuine diversity and that only this type of mixture was capable of facilitating true democracy at the municipal level. As one academic stated, “it is discourse over conflict, not unanimity, that helps democracy thrive.”[xv] Emily Talen further explains that , “Diversity is seen as the primary generator of urban vitality because it increases interactions among multiple urban components. A ‘close grained’ diversity of uses provides ‘constant mutual support’, and planning must, [Jane] Jacobs argued, ‘become the science and art of catalyzing and nourishing these close-gained working relationships.”[xvi]

As previously stated, in the contemporary, post-industrial age, we have seen tremendous change in our urban centers as we attempt to move away from the failed policies of industrialism and urban renewal. Richard Florida argues that this historical context is unprecedented and has resulted in the construction of a new socio-economic class, which he terms the "creative class." It is important to understand Florida's conception of this creative class in order to promote policies of diversity that are both inclusive of this group and support their contributions to society, but also protect the existing community from displacement and gentrification. This creative class consists of, "people who add economic value through their creativity. It thus includes a great many knowledge workers, symbolic analysts and professional and technical workers, but emphasizes their true role in the economy."[xvii] It is a grouping of people that creates ideas and innovations as opposed to physical products and represents the main thrust of post-industrialism.

Florida explains that, "Most members of the Creative Class do not own and control any significant property in the physical sense. Their property—which stems from their creative capacity—is an intangible because it is literally in their heads."[xviii] He breaks down the creative class into two separate tiers, the "Super-Creative Core" and "creative professionals." This super-creative core includes, "scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society: nonfiction writers, editors cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts and other opinion-makers."[xix] The creative professionals consist of those who "work in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech

sectors, financial services, the legal and health acre professions, and business management" and add creative value by engaging in creative problem solving and independent thinking.[xx] All of these creative-minded professions when viewed as one analogous group comprise a unique economic class that "both underpins and informs its members' social, cultural and lifestyle choices" and therefore can have dramatic effects on the revitalization of urban neighborhoods. In many cases, this dramatic effect manifests itself as gentrification and results in a loss of the existing neighborhood character and spirit. It is important, then, to promote the mixing of social and economic groups in a manner that responds to the interests of all parties in equilibrium in an effort to enhance, rather that completely modify, the identity of a community.

After reviewing the historical conception of the city and its functions, it becomes clear that there are certain indicators that need to find equilibrium in a community for that community to grow in a healthy and livable way. The notion of livability is often associated and coupled with the principles of smart growth and the ideals of the Congress for New Urbanism. The reason I haven chosen to refer to these development concepts as livability is that the terms "smart growth" and "new urbanism" seem to confound and misinform their intent and methodology. Firstly, the principles of new urbanism are more accurately grounded in the *old* urbanism of 19th and early 20th century American cities and, further back, the traditional European model of the village. Secondly, the term smart growth implies that alternative approaches to development are "stupid" or not worthwhile when in fact not all aspects of smart growth are applicable in all situations. However, both of

these schools of thought are fairly comprehensive in their approach towards creating vibrant, healthy, and equitable communities with the aim of livability. My own definition of livability does not differ greatly from the principles of smart growth and new urbanism, but instead reworks them under a framework that promotes bettering the quality of life for as many inhabitants of an urban area as possible, in terms that clearly articulate the goals and reasons for this style of development.

Livability, then, should promote the following criteria: a balance of housing stock with adequate levels of affordability maintained for a growing population in order to promote diversity and a mixed workforce; an appropriate density of development that discourages sprawl; viable and accessible transportation alternatives to automobile usage in order to decrease environmental degradation and service a low income population; public and resident participation in planning for growth; a balance of commercial businesses that service basic neighborhood needs but also contain some higher end attractions in order to stimulate economic growth; equitable access to fresh and affordable food sources; employment opportunities that afford workers the ability to support themselves and their families with what they earn; mixed land uses that situate homes, work places and commercial buildings compactly and in close proximity to light rail and major bus lines; an appropriate design and scale of buildings that emphasize local history and sensitive building practices; and lastly, the promotion of public safety and a quality of life that includes pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets, universally accessible

public spaces and community institutions, and some physical design items (such as traffic calming) that create lively, safe places for social interaction.

Furthermore, livable cities and communities should promote the neighborhood as the driving force and key element of urban redevelopment. For reasons previously mentioned and expanded upon later, neighborhoods have the opportunity to serve as the building block for successful urban development by forming relatable and identifiable areas that support citizen engagement in their maintenance and developmental growth. Additionally, these principles of livability are intended to help restore commercial and economic activity in existing urban neighborhoods, but also to revive and renew the vital social processes inherent in the traditional urban lifestyle. The study of the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles, included later in this paper, will examine how well the City's planning policies address these criteria and how effectively they are implemented at the neighborhood level.

II. A Modern History of Neighborhood Planning: The Cycles of Decline and Revitalization and the Promotion of Equitable and Livable Communities

For much of the past century, neighborhoods have received a great deal of attention among those concerned with healthy, livable cities and urban well-being. This focus on neighborhoods developed from the belief that they represent the basic foundation of the city. "The health of a city is largely dependent on the vitality of its individual neighborhoods, and the physical and social conditions in neighborhoods to a large extent define the quality of life for urban residents. They affect individual decisions to stay or seek more desirable living conditions in suburban or rural locations. Those decisions, in turn, affect the local tax base and the overall viability of urban areas."[xxi] It has long been the goal of neighborhood planning to promote the overall health of the city, and, over time, planners, politicians, and activists have strived to determine the best means of finding an equilibrium of livability. Yet, before we attempt to create healthy, equitable, livable cities in today's world, it is imperative that we first understand the theoretical advancements and shortcomings of neighborhood development over the past 125 years or so. This historical overview will highlight the three main epochs of modern neighborhood planning as outlined by Rohe and Gates in their book *Planning with Neighborhoods*, and then address today's contemporary approach as presented by Green and Haines in *Asset Building and Community Development*.

The first modern era of neighborhood planning that Rohe and Gates identify emphasized the social neighborhood and was largely the product of the settlement house approach. These "social settlements" grew out of the pervasive culture of reform present during the Progressive Era of the late 19th and early 20th century. The settlement movement represented an innovative and new attempt to address issues of urban poverty, illiteracy, public health, and crime. It embodied and expanded upon the same ideals present in many preceding efforts of the Progressive Era to improve urban life, such as the establishment of charity organizations, the advancement of penal and mental health institutions, and improved housing policies.

The movement was also concurrent with the rise of the Industrial Revolution and the development of new, more efficient means of production. These new production processes "required a concentrated labor force, which in turn created increased congestion, overcrowding, and unsanitary working conditions in working-class areas of cities" which, in turn, resulted in "high rates of morbidity, disease, and crime."[xxii] However, the Industrial Revolution also brought with it a new respect for the powers with which science and technology could impact the whole of society. The settlement house movement recognized that these same powers could alternatively be used to combat social decay and improve urban life. The notion of the settlement house was given life by a "a new breed of reformers who believed that science, blended with fellowship, could be used to solve the problems associated with rapid industrialization" and they did not limit their undertaking to one specific problem, such as education or public health, but were eager to address

an extensive assortment of problems as identified by scientific analysis of existing conditions.[xxiii] It was an approach that focused on the local community as a means of attending to urban issues. Rohe and Gates argue that it is this combination of analysis of existing conditions with an emphasis on the local community that qualify it as the first example of modern neighborhood planning.

The settlement house concept was born in England in 1884 but quickly spread to New York in 1886, and by 1930 there were more than 160 settlements in the United States. Originally, the settlement house placed great importance on education and the arts, sponsoring social activities, classes in varying subjects, and athletic programming. Yet, the settlements quickly broadened their focus and activities to include some of the immediate issues facing local residents. For example, the Hull House in Chicago (perhaps the best known settlement house in the U.S.), became involved in labor organizing and political advocacy in order to combat poor working conditions and a lack of public services in the area. As Hull House leader Jane Addams wrote, "The settlement, then, urges first, the organization of working people in order that as much leisure and orderly life as possible may be secured to them in which to carry out the higher aims of living."[xxiv]

This quote points to the nature of the work conducted by settlement house activists. They felt that the socio-political nature of modern urban centers resulted in the inability of low-income and immigrant groups to assimilate into a middle-class, industrialized society and afforded them no opportunity of self-advancement. Settlement activists blamed this on a combination of factors, the first of which was class segregation. Rohe and Gates argue that this segregation not only made

assimilation difficult but also repressed any sense of compassion amongst the upper class for the troubles of those less privileged. The second factor settlement leaders pointed to was modern capitalism, which not only furthered segregation among classes and ethnicities but also stimulated mobility, "which broke up families and destroyed important community ties."[xxv] Settlement leaders did not view capitalism as inherently immoral like many socialists at the time, but instead placed most of the blame at the individual level. They argued that capitalism could work if individuals recognized the consequences associated with the excessive private accumulation of wealth while at the same time recognizing the plight of the poor. The third factor settlement advocates critiqued involved modern social organizations and their tendency to "[break] down the family and [create] divisions between social groups."[xxvi] They charged that most standard social organizations—political clubs, labor unions, etc.—only involve one member of the family (usually male) and often promote adversarial or antagonistic relations with other organizations. Lastly, settlement leaders also criticized politicians and elected officials for ignoring the health and safety needs of low-income residents, as they found the accessibility of public services in poor areas to be inadequate, especially in regards to sanitation and living conditions.

While settlement houses tended to focus on neighborhoods and local communities, they defined these districts principally as social units rather than a series of arbitrary geographic limitations. "They saw the neighborhood as a system of social relations" and "They judged the health of the neighborhood by the degree to which residents participated in both formal and informal social and political

activities."[xxvii] As such, the goal of the settlement movement was to foster strong, unified social neighborhoods through the promotion of positive social relations and mutual concern among residents. Settlements worked to achieve these goals by maintaining close personal contact with residents and those in need of their help, promoting the development of inclusive neighborhood interaction and strong family units, maintaining a flexible organizational structure that responded to the changing and varied needs of a neighborhood, and most importantly, by providing the necessary self-help skills and inspiration to enable residents to better take charge of their own lives and assimilate into mainstream society.[xxviii]

The settlement movement can certainly be recognized as improving the living conditions and social environments of many residents, yet the success of the movement varied from settlement house to settlement house. The more active and well-publicized settlements, such as the Hull House, were effective at bringing about change but as Rohe and Gates explain, most had a minimal impact and were "small-scale organizations in areas where voting rates were low; hence, they often lacked political clout."[xxix] However, perhaps the greatest achievement of the settlement movement was its role in helping to stimulate social movement organization at a local level which not only resulted in increased citizen participation and improvements in quality of life, but also helped inform the general population about the substandard living conditions in these low-income areas.

Despite some highly visible and successful contributions there were a number of flaws and limitations to the settlement approach that Rohe and Gates point out. They argue that settlement leaders placed to much confidence in the in

the existing political system and that they did little to create new opportunities for political access among residents in order to bring about systemic change. They were more concerned with helping residents move out of the lower class than they were with eliminating it all together Furthermore, the settlement house method was paternalistic by nature as the upper class was aiding the lower class by encouraging them to enjoy and appreciate the same elements of culture and society. Lastly, settlements only served a small percentage of the urban population in need and therefore only those residents in close proximity benefited from their services.

The second approach to neighborhood development outlined by Rohe and Gates emphasized the built environment of neighborhood. During the same period in which settlement houses began to open their doors, other social reformers began to examine the physical rather than social conditions that contributed to poor health and living conditions. Instead of relying on philanthropy like the settlement houses did, these new reformers believed that it was the civic responsibility of local government to remedy pre-existing physical problems and to ensure that new development did not repeat these structural mistakes. Rohe and Gates explain that some of the main physical areas of concern in residential neighborhoods consisted of a lack of recreation and open space, exceptionally high residential densities (which restricted natural light and air circulation), congestion, pollution, and poor sanitation. While many settlement house advocates addressed these concerns and were often key to mobilization around such issues, a commitment from local government was necessary in order to carry out effective change and improvement.

Throughout the first decade of the 20th century, reformers worked to convince municipalities to adopt policies and regulations that would manage an control any new development. In many cases they were successful in implementing various zoning and subdivision regulations that controlled developmental growth, yet there was no established norm to guide these policies. These reformists, including Clarence Perry, viewed the neighborhood entity as the solution to various physical, social, and political problems. “Perry was particularly concerned with two short-comings in the urban residential environments of his day: the lack of play space and the lack of conditions that create neighborliness.”[xxx] He felt that most high-density urban developments lacked sufficient play space or open space for children. Thus, one of the aims of the neighborhood unit typology was to create an environment that allowed people to live near to their employment but still have accessible recreational opportunities in close proximity. Perry also claimed that urban residential environments encouraged isolation and a lack of community. “He blamed congestion, a lack of a distinctive and personal atmosphere, and a lack of facilities conducive to communal activities for individual alienation and low rates of political and social participation.”[xxxi] The neighborhood unit was intended to resolve these issues by creating communal recreational and commercial facilities that would foster neighborhood interaction, friendship formation, and participation in civic affairs.

Perry and other reformists felt that physical design was the key to creating neighborhoods that produced positive social consequences. The ideal neighborhoods would promote all the necessary conditions, services, and functions

needed by the average family to maintain a comfortable, healthy, and safe lifestyle. In order to achieve this goal Perry specified six guiding principles that defined the physical form of an ideal neighborhood:

- *Size*- A residential unit development should provide housing for that population for which one elementary school is ordinarily required, its actual area depending upon its population density
- *Boundaries*- The unit should be bounded on all sides by arterial streets, sufficiently wide to facilitate its bypassing, instead of penetration, by through traffic.
- *Open Spaces*- A system of small parks and recreation spaces, planned to meet the needs of the particular neighborhood, should be provided.
- *Institution Site*- Sites for the school and other institutions having service spheres coinciding with the limits of the unit should be suitably grouped about a central point, or common.
- *Local Shops*- One or more shopping districts, adequate for the population to be served, should be laid out in the circumference of the unit, preferably at traffic junctions and adjacent to similar districts of adjoining neighborhoods.
- *Internal Street System*- The unit should be provided with a special street system, each highway being proportioned to its probable traffic load, and the street net aw a while being designed to facilitate circulation within the unit and to discourage its use by through traffic.[xxxii]

The principles reflect the two fundamental beliefs that the neighborhood unit movement was founded on. Firstly, that close social interaction among residents of a local area is crucial for both individual and social health. Secondly, that a thoughtful approach to the physical design of neighborhoods would achieve these desired social relationships. In effect, "they believed in physical determinism," a belief that is reflected in today's criteria of livability.[xxxiii] Advocates of the neighborhood unit viewed it as a method to combat a collapse in local social interaction and political participation caused by rapid urbanization and technological advancement. In addition, these advocates felt that local community groups were the answer to

various urban problems such as crime and would result in an increase in political participation.

The biggest accomplishment of the neighborhood unit approach was that it focused attention on residential environments and therefore helped to generate more desirable and livable communities. Many of the neighborhood unit principles have been adopted into modern planning practices, particularly the specification of "appropriately located recreation, housing, and public facilities throughout residential areas."[xxxiv] The movement also introduced the idea that physical planning could benefit social purposes, not just aesthetic and functional principles. Furthermore, the movement emphasized a holistic and comprehensive planning approach to neighborhoods that considered, "transportation, recreation, housing, and public and private facilities…as a system rather than as discrete elements of urban development."[xxxv]

Yet, there were critics of the neighborhood unit approach, many who felt that the concept reinforced social segregation with its lack of attention paid to needy groups such as the elderly, the poor, and non-familial units. There was also an argument made that the neighborhood unit does not reflect the reality of urban life in that it, "assumes people desire intimate face-to-face relations with their neighbors" whereas, "this is not true of many people"[xxxvi] Furthermore, much like the settlement house movement, the neighborhood unit approach was paternalistic. The planning of these neighborhood units was left to professional city planners and planning "experts" with little effort to obtain citizen input. These experts carried the belief that they held the secret to fixing the problems facing urban areas.

The last major era of modern neighborhood planning which Rohe and Gates identified was primarily concerned with the political neighborhood and focused more on community action. While the neighborhood unit model had a large influence on the physical development of residential areas it accomplished little in the way of tackling the other issues facing urban neighborhoods. After World War II, development began to expand far outside central city neighborhoods, beyond municipal boundaries, and away from the scope of traditional city planning. However, this swift growth on the periphery of cities shifted the planning focus away from the chronic and unmitigated problems of the inner-city. Poverty, crime, public health, and unemployment still burdened the urban core. Rohe and Gates argue that as planning processes gravitated toward a more comprehensive approach in order to address this regional development, they actually "exacerbated these [urban] problems by enticing the middle class to flee traditional urban locations, resulting in falling municipal revenues and a concentration of the poor."[xxxvii] As a means to address falling municipal revenues and increasingly slum-like living conditions in urban centers, the federal government established the Housing Act of 1949, which allowed cities the right to obtain property in slum neighborhoods through eminent domain in an effort to turn that land over to private developers. This land could then be used for "urban renewal" development projects which often resulted in the creation of a variety of structures including luxury and low-rent private housing, commercial or industrial activities, as well as public facilities. The aim of urban renewal was to rid the city of slums, revitalize these areas, and attract the middle-class back to the urban core.

As William Peterman explains, "Federal urban policy following World War II had three general objectives: the elimination of slums, the reuse of land for middle-class housing and institutional expansion, and the revitalization of city cores. The results, however, were the destruction of neighborhoods, the ghettoization of the poor and minorities into public housing, and the continued decline of central cities."[xxxviii] It was these failures and exploitation of the urban renewal program that prompted the development of the community action approach to neighborhood planning. It became evident that the demolition of physically dilapidated areas was not the solution to the urban problems of crime, poverty, and unemployment. Urban renewal only further distressed urban areas and required the erection of high-rise public housing to house those who had been displaced. Peterman further explains that urban renewal would later evolve into the programs of the "Great Society" of the 1960s, at which point attention shifted towards programs geared at the neighborhood level and away from the federally mandated approach.[xxxix]

These new approaches at the neighborhood level focused on citizen engagement. In 1964, President Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act, which establish funding for the Community Action Program and created the Office of Economic Opportunity. The goal of the Community Action Program (CAP) was to assist urban communities in combating poverty by way organizing their resources. Designed to be independent of City Hall, these CAP agencies were made up of representatives of the major civic institutions, representatives from key community organizations, and resident representatives from local neighborhoods. The Community Action Program was unique for the time in that it placed heavy

emphasis on citizen participation and input, involving them in both planning and policymaking. The goal of this citizen involvement was to, "effect a permanent increase in the capacity of individuals, groups and communities afflicted by poverty to deal effectively with their own problems so that they need no further assistance," which represented a distinct community organizing-based approach.

Another federal initiative to address urban issues was the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (The Model Cities Program). Rohe and Gates explain that the program "sought to combine physical and social planning and development in selected low-income areas to produce a dramatic social, physical, and environmental reformation."[xl] The Model Cities program differed from the Community Action Program in that it was more specifically targeted to individual neighborhoods, sought both a physical social remedy to urban problems, and had some control over funds spent by other agencies in Model Cities neighborhoods in order to better coordinate the efficiency of these numerous agencies. Green and Haines add that, "the major difference was that the CAPs worked around local government officials, whereas Model Cities worked with them."[xli]

Programs such as CAP and Model Cities were revolutionary in that they began to view the neighborhood as a vital political entity. Proponents of the community action approach were concerned with creating a comprehensive, inclusive system that "included the poor in the benefits of democracy."[xlii] These programs were successful on many levels and can be credited with having considerable effects on the political relations of local populations, creating powerful

neighborhood organizations and home-grown community leaders. Additionally, as a result of these programs citizen and community involvement in development programs has become widespread, which helped to protect the rights of the poor and disadvantaged. Both programs were also effective in enacting broader institutional changes such as systemic evaluation of programs, which often led to changes in operation. The CAPs resulted in local agencies focusing on job training and increasing job opportunities while Model Cities was successful in creating neighborhood organizations and fostered a relationship between elected officials and the disadvantaged.

However, despite these accomplishments, the effectiveness of both CAPs and Model Cities were limited by various problems and barriers. At the most basic level there was insufficient funding to support their impressive and ambitious goals of eliminating poverty and slum conditions. Furthermore, over time a greater percentage of funding was set aside for specific programs and left little discretion to local agencies. "Thus, although greater flexibility was allowed under these programs, they did not fully live up to their promises."[xliii] Vague guidelines regarding citizen participation also contributed to a conflict between neighborhood groups and city government, which often delayed implementation of programs and increased costs. While it seems that these programs were relatively ineffective in increasing the level of the poor in decision making, their emphasis on the need for neighborhood organizations to address local problems was their most successful innovation and is still exhibited today in most neighborhood development efforts.

President Nixon's moratorium on federal housing subsidies in 1972 marked the beginning of a decline in federal assistance for urban problems. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 shifted the focus of combating urban issues toward the municipal level and cities further dispersed urban problem solving to the neighborhood organizations operating where such problems existed. As a result various innovative types of community based organizations, such as community development corporations (CDCs), were formed to make use of the money now set aside at the neighborhood level.

Today CDCs are one of the most frequently used and more successful attempts at neighborhood development. The goal of CDCs is to improve the quality of low-income neighborhoods but they differ from advocacy-oriented organizations in that they were designed to operate under a business model and work with local government and private institutions in order to carry out revitalization projects. As Sara Stoutland explains, "They are concerned about all aspects of community life and seek to address a comprehensive set of needs. They believe that residents have the most knowledge about what needs to be done in their own neighborhoods and that the community should control them through active resident participation."[xliv]

This shift in the focus of urban development to the local level signaled that the community was now viewed as the primary means for urban improvement, as opposed to the federal government. Yet, this change in focus has resulted in some unforeseen consequences, most notably a decrease in federal funding. As the federal government began to exert less influence and control over the neighborhood development process it also began to provide fewer of the resources need to ensure

the successful redevelopment of urban areas. Oftentimes, this had the undesired effect of giving neighborhoods control over revitalization efforts with too few resources to enact significant change.

Some contemporary critics argue that this local approach is the right approach but is flawed and could be further improved. Many of these critics actually represent some of today's leading voices in neighborhood and community development, and some even head many progressive community organizations engaged in perfecting the localized approach. These reformers (often through the use of CDCs) have undertaken such efforts in an attempt to combat the problems that have hindered the success of contemporary neighborhood based development. There are also some who question the viability of the local approach altogether. William Peterman argues that the success rates of local level organizations is far too low as the number of failing neighborhoods still vastly outnumber the success stories, "*and when a neighborhood does revitalize, it most often does so by gentrifying, which displaces many of the existing residents and merely shifts the neighborhood's problem to some other neighborhood.*[xlv]" The goal in creating livable communities is to promote equitable development in a manner that raises the overall standard of living but that does not displace the existing population or significantly alter the character of the neighborhood. Additionally, some claim that these programs cannot address some the larger structural problems affecting poor neighborhoods such as unemployment and have been limited in their ability to meet their desired goals. However, as Green and Haines point out, many of these problems are not a result of poor theory or practice, but a combination of opposition from certain local officials

and developers, federal programs that undermine community development efforts, and weak commitment of funding from the federal government.[xlvi] Thus, the real hope for equitable and livable communities may demand a comprehensive, local-level approach that satisfies a criteria of indicators that promote the healthy development of the neighborhood unit.

III. The Neighborhood in Context: A Brief History of Highland Park

Highland Park, as a residential neighborhood, like many early localities in Southern California, was a subdivision created during the land boom of the 1880s. Yet, the area had a unique style of development that set it apart from these other early developments and resulted in a rich and diverse history. The area was first settled over 30,000 years ago by predecessors of the Chumash tribe, who were later referred to by the Spanish settlers of the Mission San Gabriel as the Gabrielenos. Many of the soldiers of the mission began to raise cattle and eventually asked for and were granted grazing rights and, later, many were granted thousands of acres to establish ranchos. Nearly all of these ranchos were later subdivided and sold during the real estate boom of the 1880s. The boom became a bust by 1888 as sales slowed to a crawl and many of the subdivisions went broke, yet Highland Park and the adjacent community of Garvanza slowly but steadily continued to grow. Today it has a residential population of about 50,000.

The neighborhood derives its name from the unique geographic terrain of the area whose natural beauty and splendor attracted many early settlers to the locale in the first place. Due to its distinctive land contour and elevation—the area was bordered by rolling hills, the lush vegetation of the Arroyo Seco, and grassy flatlands—the neighborhood first became known as the Highlands, and later

Highland Park. A 1923 pamphlet advertising the area describes the captivating nature of the area's landscape experienced by travelers arriving to the highlands:

> Spread before the bare valleys was the lovely Arroyo with its great trees, its restful shade and its inviting grasses. And when finally the rails of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad…were laid in 1885 and the winter tourists came out from Los Angeles, the scene invited them. It so invited them in fact, that they stayed, and made their homes where they might look out on the sycamores by day and listen to the babbling of the stream by night.[xlvii]

Perhaps the most notable and cherished aspect of the region's topography was that of the Arroyo Seco, which translated means "dry streambed." Yet, the name is rather misleading and the riverbed frequently has a flow of several cubic feet per second and has historically been prone to periods of heavy flooding. The Arroyo's wondrous appeal even inspired President Theodore Roosevelt to proclaim on a visit in 1911 that, "This Arroyo would make one of the greatest parks in the world!"[xlviii]

Originally the area was used as sheep and cattle grazing land but was later subdivided into lots when land owners and real estate developers realized the potential value of property due to its proximity to the regional hubs of Los Angeles and Pasadena. During the mid 1880s the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Valley Railroad was built through the area and brought "economical, practical transportation, and a dependable, time-saving link to the two important big cities."[xlix] Before the introduction of the railroad and related development, "It was the vista of giant sycamores, rugged oaks and green hillside that brought into being a town in the Highlands in the first place. That was back in the colorful 'boom days of the eighties.' Before the boom, the Highlands were but grazing land."[l] In 1890 a second major

railroad was constructed through the area, the Los Angeles Terminal Railway, which offered 24 scheduled trains a day to local riders and in 1895, an electric trolley system was added "to compete for the active passenger trade," effectively creating both local and regional connections to Highland Park.[li]

After the completion of the railroads, the Garvanza Land Company was established by local businessmen to promote and sell local property. A major depression engulfed the whole of the southern California in the early 1890s, yet because of its prime location, established infrastructure (relatively stable housing stock, local school, rail connections), and the work of the Garvanza Land Company promotion, "the people of the area held together and, incredibly, forged ahead with uncanny prosperity"[lii] During this rough time they accomplished many civic tasks including the planting of 500 "shade trees " to beautify the streets of the community. "This spirited alliance set in motion the observance of Arbor Day celebrated throughout the nation," demonstrating the civic engagement and collective spirit of the Highland Park community.[liii] Having survived the economic turmoil of the early 1890s unscathed, Highland Park established itself as a major neighborhood in the Los Angeles region. In 1895 Highland Park was officially annexed into the City of Los Angeles in part to acquire water rights as well as police and fire protection. "Highland Park was now established as suburb of Los Angeles, but would retain its identity—especially after the arrival of Charles Lummis in 1896."[liv]

Lummis, the son of a Massachusetts preacher, traveled by foot across the country, writing of his experiences. These were published in the LA Times by friend and founder Harrison Gray Otis. While on this journey Lummis became a "champion

of the rights of Native Americans," forming friendships and learning a great deal about the history of the Southwest tribes. These experiences would later lead him to establish Los Angeles' first museum in Highland Park, the Southwest Museum, in order to celebrate their presence and history in the region. Lummis would also help to create the first historic preservation organization on the West Coast in hopes of preserving the "history and culture of both the Native American and Spanish heritage of the Southwest." Lummis was also instrumental in preservation efforts of the Arroyo Seco and nearly single-handedly furthered the development of Highland Park more than any other person, group, or institution. Described as, "the most flamboyant local resident" of the neighborhood, he pressured the City to preserve the Arroyo Seco area and in 1923 an ordinance was passed that designated 60 acres of land as the Arroyo Seco Park system. He was furthermore a noted local societal figure with a reputation for hosting lavish parties at his widely admired home and also served as City Editor of the LA Times.

In 1898, Occidental College moved to the area from Boyle Heights when offered 10 acres of land along Pasadena Avenue (today's Figueroa Avenue), the main commercial stretch and heart of Highland Park. "The apparently prudent move developed to such a point that it attracted" both President Taft and former President Theodore Roosevelt to visit the school's campus. The relocation of Occidental to the neighborhood also brought development and investment near its location along Pasadena Avenue, which was paved in 1906. This avenue also had the Pacific Electric railway that further connected the neighborhood and its attractions to a rapidly growing greater Los Angeles region.

The arrival of "Oxy" also gave the neighborhood a unique college town feel and residents began to develop a strong sense of neighborhood identity and pride. A 1923 promotional guide displayed this sense of neighborhood personality stating, "A 'college town' has always been synonymous with a 'center of culture, refinements and good taste.' It seemed that Occidental came to reinforce the hills and the sycamores in bringing to the Highlands the sort of people who build up such centers."[lv] This echoes a sort of manifest destiny sentiment where the local population and culture that was present in Highland Park was presumed to be predestined and thus truly *belonged* there: "It was virgin land—a land of gently sloping hills and soft, undulating valleys. Such a country invariably appeals to a distinct type of people—a people of an artistic and literary bent."[lvi]

Home building continued at a very fast pace during the first two decades of the 20th century, "Spurred on by the cadre of real estate developers who believed that growth was not only inevitable but desired by the community."[lvii] This rapid growth brought about the formation of the Greater Highland Park Association in 1922 and by the end of the 20s Highland Park was a fairly self-sufficient neighborhood, with "four banks, department stores, markets, and numerous churches," in addition to Occidental in the northwest corner and the Southwest Museum overlooking the Arroyo Seco Valley.[lviii] The College of Fine Arts, an extension of the University of Southern California, opened in 1901 under the guidance of William Lees Judson and remained in operation for two decades before it closed and Judson converted it into an artist studio. "Here gathered students of art from all over the West to sit at the feet of Southern California's pioneer artist and

teacher. Around this school grew up such a colony of artists to attract Signor Antonio Corsi, long considered the world's greatest art model."[lix] Additionally, a local newspaper (the Highland Park Herald), the Annandale Country Club, a Masonic Lodge, and the Bank of Highland Park were all established in the first decade of the 20th century and represented the ever increasing vitality and diversity of the area.

The neighborhood's continued growth as a culturally rich suburb of Los Angeles was reflected in the conversion of many land tracts into subdivisions which were given such colorful names such as Arroyo Heights, Hampton Terrace, Roselawn Place, and Glenview. This steady growth in development increased the risk of damage from natural disaster as expansion continued without any regard for necessary precautions. In February 1914 after several days of heavy rain the, Arroyo Seco overflowed and brought about "unprecedented destruction in the area." Highland communities now recognized the need to make the creek safer and the onset of the Great Depression brought about the channeling of the creek bed by members of the community in need of employment. Working under the Works Progress Administration, hundreds of local residents were put to work to "grade and concrete the Arroyo Seco, changing its use primarily into flood control channel" Following this channel nearly turn for turn was the Arroyo Seco Parkway, California's first freeway, which opened to cars in 1939 and ran from Pasadena to downtown LA.

By the 1930s the Highland Park community itself had grown to encompass the area of a medium-sized city at the time. The retail corridor along Pasadena Avenue was booming and the overall quality of life was high. "Highland Park had

grown from a subdivision of sheep pastures in 1885 to a bustling community in just four decades, mirroring the explosive growth of Los Angeles. "[lx] Between the 1920s-1940s, the stretch along Figueroa was major retail area with drug stores, shoe repair shops, clothing businesses, coffee shops, a bakery, a beauty shop, and a 5 and 10. Also nearby were See's Candies, Iver's Department Store, four movie theaters (including the still functional Highland), a miniature golf course, a Bank of America, and many markets including Safeway and the presently operational Galco's Market. This era represented the height of Highland Park's cultural, economic, and residential development, as the onset of World War II would have far-reaching effects on the neighborhood, city, and region.

After World War II there was a nationwide need for housing as veterans began to "re-enter civilian society[lxi]." Furthermore, the population of LA had steadily increased during the war as the defense, shipyard, and aerospace industry lured them to the southland. Most of these workers were single men who were accommodated locally in previously built-up parts of Highland Park by the conversion of older homes into single occupancy rooming-houses. Demand for family housing was met elsewhere by the creation of new subdivisions and postwar development in areas of the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys, Orange County and the South Bay area. All of these regions were relatively sparsely settled when compared to denser parts of the city such as Highland Park, which remained relatively stable. The area was given high-density zoning status in 1946 which did result in some single-family homes being replaced by two-story apartment complexes, but developers were focused on the more suburban areas that had

greater potential room to accommodate growth. By the late 1950s, younger generations began to move out of the city as "white flight" set in and many local businesses followed to the suburbs. After this great suburban migration there were various attempts reform the commercial core of Highland Park into a "new strip mall-style business district" which would have demolished a significant amount of the housing stock for parking, but this was vehemently opposed by the community and never came to fruition.

Over the next two decades Highland Park struggled to regain its retail and social status and still remained a strong artist community. By the 1980s the neighborhood was at a developmental crossroads. Many historic structures were being torn down in favor of "large, poorly designed apartment projects."[lxii] As the modern real estate boom expanded through Los Angeles to include Highland Park, developers bought up land as fast as possible and home prices doubled and then quadrupled. In 1982 a small group of residents founded the Highland Park Heritage Trust. The next year the group presented to the community on the local history of the area and drafted their first monument nomination in order to preserve the old police station. The founding of the group, "marked a change of direction for Highland Park, which, saddled with high-density zoning, was rapidly losing historic buildings to the bulldozer. Ultimately, it would have become yet another mass of strip malls and stucco boxes had the heritage trust and others not intervened."[lxiii] By the mid 1990s the group had preserved much of the historic character of the neighborhood and "left Highland Park as a much better place to live and raise a family."[lxiv] Today the area is moving towards a community driven revitalization and

is again served by light rail in the form of the Gold Line, which was installed "with community cooperation at each step, from preservation to safety to station design." Highland Park is now a community that takes great pride in its history and legacy with an active population more committed to neighborhood investment than at any point since the days of Charles Lummis. "Today with the neighborhood councils, the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, and other programs, Highland Park has awakened and is finally fulfilling the dream that the Greater Highland Park Association had so many years ago: the true spirit of the community stepping into the future while celebrating and preserving its past."[lxv]

IV. The Process of Neighborhood Based Planning within Los Angeles and Highland Park

In order to examine both the intent and the reality of how Los Angeles' planning approach facilitates livability citywide and specifically in the Highland Park neighborhood, it is imperative to first understand the structure of the city government and how the planning process is carried out. In the City of Los Angeles, the urban planning system involves five main players who each have varying degrees of power and influence; the mayor, the City Planning Commission, the Area Planning Commissions, the Planning and Land Use Management Committee of the city council (PLUM), and the City of Los Angeles Planning Department. To a lesser extent, the neighborhood councils also influence the planning process, although they have no formal authority in the decision making process.

A brief overview of the important players in the planning process will show that the mayor exhibits his influence by appointing the director of planning who serves as the head of the Planning Department and is selected, "on the basis of administrative and technical qualifications, with special reference to actual experience in and knowledge of accepted practice in the field of city planning."[lxvi] The City Planning Commission oversees individual planning matters and makes recommendations on how to improve broad guidelines such as the City's general plan, but they do not manage the Planning Department and instead they serve more of an advisory role. Area Planning Commissions (APCs) are "quasi-judicial bodies"

whose purpose is to hear local appeals on land use matters and may exercise additional powers granted to them by the city council. The members of these seven regional commissions must live within the region served by the APC and are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council.

One of the most notable innovations in the LA planning process has been the development of the system of neighborhoods councils established in 2000 which placed much more emphasis on community involvement and citizen participation. As a result of its far-reaching and extensive municipal boundaries, its relatively few elected officials, and a long history of annexation, Los Angeles has always struggled to relate neighborhood concerns to City Hall. By the mid-1990s much of the San Fernando Valley favored secession from the City due to a lack of concern and attention to their localized problems. As a result, the City began to seriously consider options to increase neighborhood empowerment and after investigating neighborhood councils in other cities the City agreed to establish advisory neighborhood councils in their 2000 charter. The goal was for the system to be as inclusive and broadly-based as possible. The charter stated that, "neighborhood council membership will be open to everyone who lives, works, or owns property in the area," which even permitted the inclusion of non-registered voters, non-citizens, and other non-resident stakeholders. This effectively opened the door for anyone in the City of Los Angeles to share their concerns and express their desires over their neighborhood's planning projects. In 1971, the City created its first "specific plan" as a way to implement the goals and vision of the general plan in a precise locality. In 1984 the city adopted community plans as a means to address local issues within

each of the city's 35 community planning areas. This dispersed planning authority decentralized the role of City Hall, offering communities better authority over planning initiatives in their area.

The most important duty of the planning system is the establishment of the general plan, which guides the wide-ranging and broad development goals of the entire city. California State law demands that each city must prepare and adopt a comprehensive, general plan for its long-term development. This Framework Element must contain seven components, including land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise and public safety. In addition to these, state law allows cities to include additional components to their general plans, which effectively provides local governments with the flexibility to address the specific needs and distinctive character of their municipalities. In fulfillment of these requirements, the City of Los Angeles' general plan contains citywide components for all topics except land use, which are established by the policies and standards of the community plans. The Framework Element of the LA General Plan provides guidelines for future updates of the City's community plans but it does not supersede the more detailed community and specific plans. As the General Plan Overview states, "The City of Los Angeles is a city of cultural and natural diversity: its communities reflect a variety of people, while its environment reflects a variety of natural features ranging from mountains and hills to rivers, wetlands and coastal areas. This Element contains policies that are intended to maintain this diversity."[lxvii]

The Framework of the LA General Plan does not promote the idea of livability explicitly, but connotes many closely associated ideals and principles of smart growth, new urbanism, in addition to livability. The City contends that the principal objectives of the Framework's Land Use chapter are to "support the viability of the City's residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, and, when growth occurs, to encourage sustainable growth in a number of higher-intensity commercial and mixed-use districts, centers and boulevards and industrial districts particularly in proximity to transportation corridors and transit stations."[lxviii] The City even goes on to specify that new homes, retail, and workplaces should be located primarily in neighborhoods, along boulevards, and near transit stations under the belief that "By focusing new development in the right places, we can protect single family neighborhoods, reduce car trips, cut down on air pollution, encourage investment, build more affordable homes, and improve our quality of life."[lxix] This approach strongly supports aspects of a more livable, equitable city in which there is a mix of uses, a balance of housing, improved access to transportation, and better public safety and health.

The goals of the General Plan, when outlined in more detail further demonstrate a commitment to principles of livability. In regards to land use, the City aspires to focus growth in areas that best improve neighborhood quality of life. Within the General Plan, the City designates six types of areas that are best suited for new development, two of which are present or could be easily facilitated in Highland Park and will be expanded upon here. The first is the concept of the "neighborhood district," defined to be, "pedestrian-oriented retail focal points for

surrounding residential neighborhoods (15,000 to 20,000 persons) containing a diversity of local-serving uses." Neighborhood districts are generally areas in which people walk from their homes to visit shops or services that operate primarily for the local community with most buildings only one or two stories. The second is the notion of "mixed-use" boulevards which, "connect the City's Neighborhood Districts, Community and Regional Centers, and Downtown" and "are served by a variety of transportation facilities." In this case it can be argued that Highland Park is certainly a neighborhood district, with Figueroa Street serving as a boulevard that connects the area to both downtown and Pasadena with several bus routes and the Gold Line running adjacent to it.

The housing goals of the General Plan focus on providing homes for everyone in the City of Los Angeles. "The Framework Element proposes the expansion of the City's capacity for housing units by the provision of bonus densities for the integration of housing with commercial uses in districts, centers, and boulevards." Additionally, the General Plan aims to provide further incentives for the dispersal of affordable units throughout the entire city, the development of family-size units in multi-family projects, and an accelerated permitting process for affordable units. The City also seeks to establish better standards for residential projects in order to "provide for livable communities." These housing goals are intended to address the lack of housing that exists at an affordable level for both current and future generations. If carried out under this pretense we have the opportunity to construct new homes that not only create safe, livable communities, but that also preserve the

scale and character of residential neighborhoods and improve access to transportation options, and therefore jobs.

Job creation is the main goal of the economic development aspect of the General Plan under the belief that the creation and maintenance of a sufficient job base is crucial to enhancing the quality of life citywide. To maintain this job base we must "work to attract and retain businesses; support emerging industries; streamline approval processes; expand job training programs; and create industries and jobs that help us conserve our natural resources and protect the environment."[lxx]

In addressing transportation, the City states that its primary goals are to, "provide adequate accessibility to commerce, to work opportunities, and to essential services, and to maintain acceptable levels of mobility of all those who live, work, travel, or move goods in Los Angeles" while recognizing that in order to achieve this there must be a comprehensive plan of physical infrastructure improvements. Everyone who resides, works, or travels in Los Angels should have access to modes of transportation that enables them to move about the city in an efficient manner. Reducing automobile dependency can only be achieved if an integrated hierarchy of transportation modules—encompassing the pedestrian, bicycle, car, local shuttle, public bus, and rail transit—is in a position to replace it.

Other infrastructure improvements are tackled in the infrastructure and services goals of the General Plan. In order to create more livable cities and improve the overall quality of life, the underlying infrastructure of the City must be able to adapt the radical changes in development strategies and approaches. This requires

dedicated work to maintain and improve the City's roads, schools, sewers, libraries, police, fire, park systems, telecommunications, earthquake response, and urban vegetation. In some cases this may necessitate destruction instead of repair. The changes needed may seem daunting or even overstated, but they are not impossible, and the current economic crisis presents as good a chance as any to rebuild the city's infrastructure.

The open space and conservation objectives of the General Plan are "oriented around the conservation of significant resources, provision of outdoor recreational opportunities, minimization of public risks from environmental hazards, and use of open space to enhance community and neighborhood character" another strong alignment with the ideal of livability. Los Angeles is a unique model of urbanity in that it contains numerous mountains, rivers, ocean areas, parks, and other natural features that are often in discord with the built environment. It is the goal of the City to protect these valuable resources while simultaneously creating safe and inviting opportunities for children and adults to utilize these features and enhance neighborhood character.

The last objective addressed in the General Plan relates to urban form and neighborhood design and is intended to improve community and neighborhood livability. The City defines urban form as "(a) the 'general pattern of building height and development intensity' and (b) the 'structural elements' that define the City physically, such as natural features, transportation corridors (including the planned fixed rail transit system), open space, public facilities, as well as activity centers and focal elements." The goal is to create a safe, attractive, livable city for both current

and future residents. Livable Places, a now defunct affordable housing advocacy group, summarized the City's goal to strengthen the identity and quality of life in Los Angeles while accommodating growth by:

- Respecting and creating a "sense of place" for each of the diverse neighborhoods and districts that make up the City;
- Better designing our streets according to how they are used, including creating pedestrian districts and transit segments.
- Creating standards to raise the quality of development;
- Making streets safe and attractive to pedestrians; and
- Providing lighting, public art, street trees, benches, trash cans, and bus stops that enhance neighborhood character.[lxxi]

From this summary of the Los Angeles General Plan Framework it is evident that the City is clearly responsive to the concept of livability and promoting a healthy standard of living to the greatest amount of residents possible, although their approach has room for improvement. In order to gauge the effectiveness of their intent outlined within the Framework versus the reality of outcomes, this paper will use the neighborhood of Highland Park as a model to examine the degree to which livability is actually being implemented by the City.

With a basic understanding of the city planning process and some familiarity with the Los Angeles General Plan Framework, it becomes easier to evaluate how effectively these guiding principles and strategies facilitate the creation of livable neighborhoods. Within Highland Park, the City has made an attempt to revitalize the neighborhood by first restoring the area's main commercial and local business district along Figueroa Street. This effort to develop Figueroa as a "mixed-use boulevard" that would serve the residents of the Highland Park "neighborhood

district," fits in with the City's desire to focus growth and development in such areas as outlined in the General Plan.

V. How Highland Park and the Ave. 57 Specific Plan Makes Use of Policies and Programs to Promote Equilibrium, Equity, and Livable Communities

Since the completion of Ave. 57 Gold Line Transit Station in 2003, significant public investment has been made in both land use planning and infrastructure improvement in the surrounding area. As a means to promote walkable, mixed-use development around the station area and along Figueroa Street, the Los Angeles City Council adopted the Avenue 57 Neighborhood Specific Plan, creating the Avenue 57 Transit Oriented District, in August of 2002. The Gold Line currently travels from Union Station in downtown LA, through the neighborhoods of Lincoln Heights and Highland Park, continuing northeast towards Pasadena, finally terminating in the city of Sierra Madre. Later this year (2009), the Gold Line Extension from Union Station into East Los Angeles is scheduled to be completed and will further link Highland Park to the communities of Little Tokyo and Boyle Heights.

These type of transit oriented developments (TODs) strongly promote walkability and meet several criteria of livability. Today, successful TOD projects are generally thought to be "mixed-use, walkable, location-efficient development that balances the need for sufficient density to support convenient transit service with

the scale of the adjacent community" while remaining, "mixed-income in character" and in service.[lxxii] This type of development is reminiscent of the early twentieth century when so called "streetcar suburbs" were commonplace. Frequently, as was the case in Los Angeles and Highland Park, streetcar lines linked the residential communities on a city's fringe with the jobs in the urban center. These streetcar stops often had collections of small retail shops to serve commuters and residents alike. While most of these streetcar lines were built by the developer and were more accurately "development-oriented transit" rather than "transit-oriented development," they were certainly the predecessor of modern TOD planning.[lxxiii] As we move away from the era of new highway construction in urban areas, TODs present a feasible alternative to big box and large-scale commercial development and can even produce revenue for transit agencies and local governments when developed on municipal owned land, as is the case in Highland Park.

Yet, the successful implementation of TOD plans can also provide many other benefits besides increasing land values and revenue for government agencies. One such benefit is the reduction of auto-use. Residents of TODs are twice as likely to not own a car as the U.S. average and are five times more likely to commute by transit than others in their municipal region.[lxxiv] The past few years have also seen a growth in transit ridership, an increased investment in transit by cities, aggravation with congestion related to sprawl and traffic, an increase in smart growth and livability movements, and overall, a greater acknowledgment of the advantages that linking development and transit present.[lxxv] Yet, what really makes a TOD truly transit-oriented? As Dena Belzer and Gerald Autler explain, "Effective TODs can help foster

more efficient land use patterns and create a more balanced set of transportation choices in which automobiles coexist alongside other options" (Belzer/Autler). However, when we examine many of the existing projects built in the past decade that claim to be transit-oriented, we see that although many have been more than happy to embrace the term, most have fallen short of the idea's full potential. While TOD is only one part of the larger movement for livability intended to reform our urban areas, it is a vital tactic for capitalizing on the benefits of transit investments and "providing a real alternative to traditional development at the local level." In addition, as a model of development in which efficient land use and transportation work together, TOD can help create a sort of planning framework for larger regional efforts.[lxxvi]

Transit-oriented development will only fulfill its full potential if it is viewed as a "new paradigm of development rather than as a series of marginal improvements. TOD cannot be and should not be a utopian vision: It must operate within the constraints of the market and realistic expectations of behavior and lifestyle patterns."[lxxvii] Some TOD advocates actually overemphasize the effectiveness of the projects and ignore the still prevalent appeal of the suburban, detached single-family home. TOD is just one tool to promote more livable communities and in order to make it effective there must be an accompanying adaptation of common social choices and habits. "The market and lifestyle patterns can and do change as a result of both policy choices and socio-cultural trends. The automobile was not always the dominant form of transportation, and suburban living was not always the lifestyle of choice."[lxxviii] These changes were brought about by government policy at the expense of other forms of transit. There is no reason to think

that as we move toward an era where the majority of both U.S. and global population resides in urban settings, that this cannot be applied to contemporary attempts at alternative transportation, with government subsidies and policies leading the charge.

In regard to Highland Park, the area targeted by the Specific Plan is actually very well suited for transit oriented development, with both the Gold Line Metro Station and numerous bus lines running through the area. The boundaries of the Avenue 57 Neighborhood Specific Plan includes the area shown within the heavy dashed lines on the map included in the appendix. In this area Figueroa Street represents the main commercial thoroughfare with a mixture of both commercial and residential uses. The area is roughly bounded by Avenue 50 to the west, Avenue 61 to the east, Monte Vista Street to the north, as well as Echo Street to the south.

The Avenue 57 Specific Plan establishes goals for the development within the area as a means to guide revitalization efforts. First, at a general level the Specific Plan is intended to apply the goals and policies of the Northeast LA Community Plan, the citywide General Plan Framework previously discussed, as well as the transportation component of the General Plan. Additionally, the Specific Plan aims to promote a viable, walkable commercial district that is in close proximity to public transit. This is intended to develop a local business district that can provide needed goods and services in a location that is accessible to residents of Highland Park.

The Avenue 57 Plan also aims to stimulate economic development in the community through incentives that reuse preexisting structures while placing less emphasis on cars (by not requiring traditional parking and other non-safety building requirements). The Plan also hopes to improve economic vitality by instituting mixed-use

elements to the commercial areas and by streamlining the approval process. Furthermore, the Specific Plan contains provisions to preserve and maintain the historic nature and character of the neighborhood while still accommodating growth. The City feels that a combination of the regulations of the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, the establishment of adaptive re-use policies, and limits to the massing of parcels—as means to maintain an appropriate scale of buildings—will all contribute to preserving the area's unique historical quality.

Another important goal of the Specific Plan is to promote and maintain a diverse community in the area. The plan specifies that development should promote the creation of a community, "where people of many different ages, incomes, family formation types, and cultural perspectives will live, work and shop in harmony in a neighborhood that supports cultural differences among neighbors." They aim to achieve this by encouraging an assortment of housing types to allow a diversity of income ranges, providing for multi-modal transportation linkages that allow for the existing diverse population access to job opportunities beyond their current means, and assisting in the preservation of a sense of place that originally attracted this diverse population mix to Highland Park. In order to promote this diverse housing stock the City recognizes the need for more stable affordable housing options. The creation of a community that residents can "live in from childhood through family formation, to retirement" necessitates, "supporting home ownership, promoting development of family-friendly affordable homes available to local residents to purchase, as well as supporting new construction of family-sized, affordable homes and housing units in the Specific Plan Area. The City also further specifies that the goals of the Avenue 57 Plan should also encourage the establishment of cultural facilities

and services, and the creation of open recreational spaces in an attempt to "*retain, support and expand the traditional local population* of working writers and artists in the neighborhood."

The Avenue 57 Specific Plan also includes a number of explicit development incentives for proposed projects in the area, many of which promote the creation of a more livable environment. In an attempt to retain existing and attract additional members of the "creative class" that Richard Florida has defined, the City created a Joint Living and Work Quarters incentive which allows developers to create a studio-style residence which could be used as both living and work space. The plan specifies that this style of development shall be permitted for architects, artists, attorneys, multimedia professionals, engineers, fashion and graphic designers, photographers, and other similar occupations. Yet, it is important to qualify this incentive with some sort of provision that would allocate a certain amount of these units to locally established artists in Highland Park or these studio-style residences could be nothing more than a harbinger of gentrification. The plan also contains an incentive for the creation of pedestrian amenities which it defines to include outdoor dining, public plazas, retail courtyards, or pedestrian arcades that are accessible for public use. This provision was included to promote a steady use of public space and to encourage social interaction, thereby increasing public safety. Projects that meet this criteria will be permitted a 25 percent increase in allowable floor area. A similar floor area bonus will also be given to projects that include general merchandise stores or any hardware, computer, art supply, book, or music stores in an effort to promote local business and retail operations.

Additionally, the Specific Plan includes a bonus for projects that incorporate elements of community usage. This may include day or senior care centers, museums, cultural centers, small concert spaces or public theaters, and even police substations as a means to meet the basic services and needs of the local community. Any project that includes development of a community use is also entitled to a 25 percent increase in the maximum floor area allowed which according to the City, "allows the community use to be developed or incorporated without the floor area being counted against maximum permitted floor area."

In an effort to promote transit-oriented development near the Gold Line Station the City also offered reduced parking incentives. As long as a project sits no more than 1500 feet from the station it will be granted a 15 percent reduction in the amount of parking otherwise required, and contrary to the regulations of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, no additional parking will be required for development that requires either a change of existing use or extensive remodeling of existing buildings. Other incentives included within the Specific Plan include provisions that encourage adaptive reuse, mixed-use development, and the creation of commercial artcraft uses such as art, music, dance, and small film studios.

In addition to these incentives there are also a number of required development standards that apply to projects fronting Figueroa and Monte Vista Streets. In addition to satisfying the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Board (described later), developments must also adhere to restrictions such as a maximum height of three stories and requirements on the proximity of building frontage along property lines. The plan also stipulates that building frontage may be set back if pedestrian amenities are provided, and

that each tenant must have an entrance directly accessible to the street at the same grade as the sidewalk, and parking lots should not front onto the street, while at least 50 percent of all exterior walls on the ground floor should consist of transparent windows in order to create a more walkable and pedestrian friendly environment. The Specific Plan further specifies development standards for desired mixed-use projects in the area as a means to ensure that they successfully attract and promote public usage. One requirement is that all open spaces with no other explicit use should be landscaped by “shrubs, trees, ground cover, lawns, planter boxes, flowers, or fountains” and that paved areas, “shall consist of enhanced paving materials such as stamped concrete, permeable paved surfaces, tile, and/or brick pavers.”

There have been many investments in the area since the completion of the Avenue 57 Gold Line Station. These include implementation of the Northeast Community Linkages Program, sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which invested over $2,000,000 in public streetscape and transportation enhancements (defined by the City to mean stamped crosswalks, street lighting, furniture, and other amenities). Additionally, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative program (LANI) sponsored the installation of bus shelters for passengers at the stops along Figueroa Street. Furthermore, the Targeted Neighborhood Initiative Program included another $3,000,000 to improve communal public areas and building facades along the main stretch of Figueroa between Avenue 50 and 60.

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) also owns and operates four public parking lots in the immediate vicinity of the Ave. 57 Station that are currently underutilized. As such, the City views these plots as an opportunity to revitalize the area

by creating transit-oriented developments on these lots that would "link the transit station and the community with a mix of residential and commercial land uses. On September 9, 2005 the City Council adopted this idea and authorized the Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD) and LADOT to release a Request for Qualifications to developers. The City then prepared a development concept consisting of a transit-oriented, mixed-use project that contains affordable rental and home ownership units, commercial space, day care/child care center and public parking. After the extensive RFQ selection process, the City settled on the private firm McCormack Baron Salazar to lead the development.

McCormack Baron Salazar (MBS) is a private for-profit developer which prides itself on its commitment to revitalizing communities with the least possible intrusion and disturbance to the existing community. They consider themselves to be the "nation's leading for-profit developer of economically integrated urban neighborhoods," having developed 124 projects in 33 cities. The self-described mission of MBS is to "rebuild neighborhoods in central cities across the United States that have deteriorated through decades of neglect and disinvestment."[lxxix] MBS stands apart from many other for-profit developers in that their approach to urban development focuses on creating vibrant, diverse neighborhoods that are accessible to people of all ages, races, and income levels. MBS describes their work as "guided by the belief that a strong neighborhood is economically, racially, ethnically, and generationally diverse" and that their developments help to create neighborhoods and communities that "afford the same housing opportunity for all types of people, for existing as well as new members of the community, for renters and homeowners."[lxxx]

McCormack Baron Salazar's unique approach in the realm of for-profit development emphasizes many principles that facilitate more equitable and livable neighborhoods. Firstly, MBS promotes a multi-disciplinary approach to neighborhood development by assembling a team of staff members for each project that includes employees skilled in the fields of finance, design, construction, law, management, and community participation. Additionally, the design and development of MBS projects is given considerable thought with regards to livability in order to design neighborhoods that instill residents with a sense of pride and promote a feeling of community. MBS describes this aspiration towards livability when they state "A fundamental principle in MBS neighborhood planning is to restore a network of safe, attractive, tree-lined streets and sidewalks that encourage use of outdoor space by residents of all ages. Restored connections to surrounding neighborhoods and central business districts are welcomed by residents who find they can easily commute to employment and walk, drive, or take public transportation to commercial areas."[lxxxi]

Furthermore, MBS has developed innovative financial tactics in the complex world of mixed-finance housing development. Their inventive strategies attempt to leverage as much private funding as possible while still maintaining long-term affordability. This approach often incorporates multiple funding sources and may include federal funds, bonds, mortgage financing, foundation grants and loans, pension funds, and local government funding. Lastly, MBS makes the effort to gather input from the community and to involve them in designing the future of their neighborhood. Working with the non-profit organization Urban Strategies, MBS looks to develop and incorporate services that residents deem to be most important. By advancing the development of

social networks and services, MBS and Urban Strategies can help link residents to benefits such as job training, child care, youth activities, elderly services, and to education and recreational opportunities. This holistic, and rather rare for-profit approach to neighborhood development is intended to incorporate different income levels in order to "dispel the myth that these groups can not and do not want to live in the same area," as project manager Antonio Bermudez states.

Based on the nature of the City's Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for potential developers of the Avenue 57 Transit-Oriented, Mixed-Use Development Project and their past work in this field, MBS felt that their firm was particularly well suited to take on such a project. In order to satisfy the RFQ, MBS had to demonstrate, firstly, that they have had success with previous experience in developing similar scale projects "within budget and in a timely manner," and secondly, that they were capable of securing the financial capacity to develop such a project. Once MBS submitted this information to the City it was reviewed by LAHD and deemed to have successfully demonstrated the necessary skills, experience, and financial capacity to meet the requirements outlined in the RFQ. LAHD then selected MBS, along with two other developers, as potential developers of the site.

The next part of the selection process involved LAHD issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to these three selected developers and requested that they submit a full development concept proposal that would meet the desired project goals. MBS then drafted and prepared a development proposal that satisfied the City's desire for a "transit-oriented, mixed-use project that contains affordable rental and home ownership units, commercial space, day care/child care center and public parking." The only deviation

MBS made from this criteria was the decision to decline to include a childcare element in their proposal. They justified this decision by concluding that the area of Highland Park is sufficiently serviced in this regard and that the space designated for this purpose could be better utilized to serve the community. Their alternative was to propose a satellite campus of the East Los Angeles College in place of childcare services. On March 31, 2008, two and a half years after the release of the RFQ, McCormack Baron Salazar was selected as the developer for the Avenue 57 Transit-Oriented, Mixed-Use Development Project.

Previous to their selection as developer of the project, MBS was not allowed to seek or incorporate community involvement in their plan at the request of the City. As such, much of the community objected to certain aspects of their RFP concept. In an effort to better serve the area's residents and demonstrate a commitment to their concerns, MBS scrapped their original plans and began to work with a new architectural firm, M2A, who had previously worked with the Highland Park community to design the Arroyo Seco Regional Branch Library.

After their selection by the City, MBS was granted a six-month exclusive negotiating agreement, later extended another six months, in order to prepare a final proposal for development. MBS is currently in the process of finishing this procedure and anticipate that they should receive all planning approvals in the fourth quarter of 2009 and would then be able to begin construction in the second quarter of 2010.

The latest proposal plan by MBS terms the project the Highland Park Transit Village and redevelops the three city-owned parking lots that are situated on the

three square blocks defined by Avenues 56 and 59, and Figueroa Street and Marmion Way. The MBS redevelopment proposal includes market rate homeownership units, affordable rental units, ground floor commercial space and replacement parking. Some of this proposed commercial space would be designed to function as ELAC classrooms depending on need and the level of initial commercial investment. ELAC has proposed to provide both day and night classes that focus on basic skills, technology, and fine arts.

The architectural design of the development is guided first and foremost by the Highland Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) Ordinance, which represents the largest HPOZ in the City. HPOZs, otherwise known as historic districts, "provide for review of proposed exterior alterations and additions to historic properties within designated districts" as a means to preserve the cohesive historic character of these areas. MBS has stated that its architectural team will present a proposal which incorporates historic elements that correspond to the context of Highland Park and are they are confident that this design will result in a Certificate of Compatibility from the HPOZ Board.[lxxxii]

The first development site is located in the parking lot stretching between Avenues 56 and 57. This development will contain 33 market-rate condos with parking facilities for residents located underneath. It will also contain ground floor retail space along Avenue 57. The second lot (between Avenues 57 and 58) will be developed as 61 affordable rental units which will maintain their affordable status for a minimum of 55 years, ensuring a long-term mix of income levels among residents of the area. This rental development will also contain 9000 square feet of

flexible retail space which could become classroom space if retail demand is not immediate, as well as for public and private parking. The 61 rental units will also incorporate the concept of universal design which "creates environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design." This affords limited accessibility households and the elderly the opportunity to enjoy the same standard of living as their neighbors. All of the proposed units would be designed in the same fashion with materials and appliances that would "facilitate ease of operation for all residents. All building entry ways, amenities, and common areas serve all households equally." The final development site, along Figueroa Street, would be comprised of seven townhouse-style home ownership units without public parking. The total development cost of the two-acre Highland Park Transit Village site is estimated to be slightly more than $57,000,000. In total the development will contain approximately 10,000 square feet of retail space, 101 total residential units—61 of which will be affordable rental units with the other 40 being home ownership units—and will include flexible retail space which could be occupied by the ELAC satellite campus.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations: What Can Be Improved?

The objectives established in the Los Angeles General Plan Framework, the Avenue 57 Specific Plan, the criteria of the Request for Qualifications, and the successful recruitment of a socially conscious developer like MBS to develop a TOD that promotes social and economic diverse neighborhoods, all contribute to the City's implicit facilitation of livability principles. Yet, there are other programs and

approaches that could further the livability of Los Angeles neighborhoods like Highland Park and ensure that they grow in a healthy way.

The first program that could be established in Highland Park and other areas of Los Angeles is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system for Neighborhood Development, or LEED-ND. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), LEED is a third party certification program that encourages and helps facilitate global adoption of sustainable building and development practices through the use of accepted performance criteria. The result of a collaboration between USGBC, the Congress for New Urbanism, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, LEED for Neighborhood Development is the first national system for neighborhood design that promotes the principles of smart growth, green building, and livability. LEED-ND certification provides "verification that a development's location and design meet accepted high levels of environmentally responsible, sustainable development."[lxxxiii]

Adherence to the guidelines of the LEED-ND program is intended to result in a series of benefits for the community and the promotion of the program's four main goals: to encourage healthy living, reduce urban sprawl, protect threatened species, and to increase transportation choice and decrease automobile dependence. In an effort to promote healthy living LEED-ND, "emphasizes the creation of compact, walkable, vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods with good connections to nearby communities."[lxxxiv] USGBC claims that in addition to the social benefits of this type of livable development, research has shown that living in a mixed-use environment that is within walking distance of basic shops and services results in increased

walking and biking among residents, which improve cardiovascular and respiratory functions and reduce the risk of hypertension and obesity.

As a means to combat the impacts of urban sprawl and the unregulated spreading of the built environment, LEED-ND promotes more livable and efficient patterns of growth in "locations that are closer to existing town and city centers, areas with good transit access, infill sites, previously developed sites, and sites adjacent to existing development."[lxxxv] Sprawling developments typically feature low-density housing and commercial uses located in auto-centric areas and result in many negative impacts to the surrounding natural environments. These include the fragmentation of farmland, forests, and wildlife habitat; a degradation of water quality through the destruction of wetlands and increased surface runoff; and poor air quality and increased pollution as a result of increased car travel. This fragmentation and loss of natural habitat pose a threat to many imperiled species. LEED-ND promotes compact development on sites that are within or adjacent to existing development in order to minimize habitat fragmentation and preserve areas for recreation.

Lastly, LEED for Neighborhood Development is intended to decrease auto dependency by increasing the availability and accessibility of other transportation choices. Clearly these two things greatly influence one another as convenient transportation options—such as buses, rail lines, bike lanes, wide sidewalks, and car sharing programs—are generally more available near downtowns or neighborhood centers, which are also the locations that exhibit less frequent auto use. LEED for Neighborhood Development, in its use of the basic framework of other LEED rating

systems, recognizes development projects that "successfully protect and enhance the overall health, natural environment, and quality of life" of our urban neighborhoods. While the Ave. 57 Specific Plan is oriented along much the same lines, the LEED-ND rating system provides a more quantifiable checklist for gauging success.

Another program which promotes the principles of livability that could be implemented in Highland Park is the National Trust Main Street Center, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Their unique approach focuses on revitalizing traditional commercial districts, such as Figueroa Street, through an "an innovative methodology that combines historic preservation with economic development to restore prosperity and vitality to downtowns and neighborhood business districts." In an attempt to empower people, organizations, and communities to achieve neighborhood district revitalization, the Main Street approach is guided by a four-point agenda. It is a community driven approach that is designed to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation with an emphasis on creating more livable communities. "The Main Street Approach advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community."[lxxxvi]

The comprehensive revitalization approach offered by the National Trust Main Street Center has had tremendous success in cities and towns nationwide. Described below are the four main points that that guide the Main Street approach

and together help to build a sustainable and holistic community revitalization effort. It is a comprehensive strategy that is tailored to meet local needs and opportunities and works in four distinct areas: design, economic restructuring, promotion, and organization.

Organization is the first step in the Main Street approach and has the aim of getting all of the various stakeholders working toward the same objective and assembling the necessary human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. The basic organizational structure of the program consists of a governing board and standing committees to lead the volunteer-driven program. These volunteers are managed and supported by a paid program director. This structure not only breaks up the workload and clearly defines responsibilities, but additionally builds support and cooperation among the key players.

Promotion is the second of the four points of the Main Street approach and serves to project a positive image of the commercial district that would encourage investment by consumers, residents and other patrons to live, work, shop, and play in the Main Street district. A comprehensive and effective promotional strategy that markets a neighborhood's unique characteristics to potential investors, business owners, and residents can forge a positive image of the area through advertising, retail promotions, special events, and marketing campaigns devised by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and further investment in the area.

Design represents the third point of the Main Street approach and is intended to transform the physical characteristics and outward appearance of the

neighborhood into an inviting and appealing district. Capitalizing on its most attractive assets, which may include historic buildings or pedestrian-oriented streets, is just the beginning of the story. "An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer." Thoughtful and carefully planned design activities also can serve as a model for good preservation practices in the commercial district by enhancing physical appearance through the rehabilitation of historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

The final step of the Main Street approach concerns *Economic Restructuring*. The goal of this stage is to strengthen a neighborhood's "existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base." The Main Street program helps develop and advance the competitiveness of established businesses while simultaneously seeking new compatible businesses and economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to the local needs of that community. Converting unused or underused commercial space, sometimes through adaptive reuse, into economically productive property also aids in improving the profitability of the neighborhood.

In addition to the above mentioned programs, the City could also refine and improve its existing policies through some sort of explicit action plan to address livability. Many of these potential improvements are outlined in *The Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City*, and some are in fact being utilized with the

Highland Park Ave. 57 Specific Plan. In regards to housing there is much the City could do to promote a more livable and equitable urban future. To state that the creation of more affordable housing is a goal of creating livable neighborhoods is not enough. One way to ensure that supply of affordable housing meets the growing demand is to adopt an inclusionary zoning policy for the City of Los Angeles. This would mandate that all new residential developments include a specific percentage of affordable units (i.e. 20%). Mixed income residences ensure that these units are spread throughout the city and would help to reduce residential segregation by income and ethnicity. The city could further promote affordable housing by decreasing minimum lost sizes and rezoning areas for multifamily use. Another issue that plagues the Los Angeles housing stock is a lack of safe affordable units. Slum housing conditions expose much of Los Angeles' low-income population to the dangers of lead paint contamination, rodent and vermin infestations, faulty utilities, and structural deficiencies. To combat these problems the City should train more housing inspectors in order to better enforce housing safety laws and to identify slumlords. One suggestion proposed by the authors of *The Next Los Angeles* is to create a special Housing Court in order to take swift legal action against slumlords. The City should also work to better inform tenants of their rights in an effort to help them enforce housing rules. One way in which the City is promoting livability through housing policy is through the rent escrow account program which allows tenants to withhold rent and instead pay an escrow account when building code violations amass.

Furthermore, the city's zoning codes should be revamped in order to more easily promote principles of livability. Aside from promoting mixed-use developments zoning revisions should also include the replacement of off-street parking minimum requirements with restrictions on the maximum number of parking spaces allowed. This in combination with a reduction in free parking should reduce auto-use and improve congestion, pollution, and public health.

Another component of livability neglected by the City is equitable access to fresh food sources. The City should help underserved neighborhoods attract healthy food markets and eateries as a means to lower rates of obesity and other diet-related diseases. As the authors of *The Next Los Angeles* explain, "by giving support to small and locally owned restaurants and food vendors, the city can encourage a more diverse and healthy mix of prepared food options in low-income neighborhoods."[lxxxvii] The City can further encourage healthy eating by promoting various means of urban agriculture. Implementing community gardens, farmers' markets, and community supported agriculture programs ensures a stable supply of locally grown food and also creates vibrant community spaces that attract residents and improve commerce for nearby businesses.

The City should also more equitably promote resident participation in the planning process by restructuring the neighbor council system. While well intentioned and potentially effective, "the procedures by which many neighborhood councils were established undermined some of their potential for public improvement in local decision making. Outreach was insufficient to overcome the time and language barriers that many residents face in learning about, attending,

and participating in neighborhood council planning meetings."[lxxxviii] In order to capture the potential benefits of the neighborhood council system there should be some sort of provision that ensures representation for all groups with a vested interest in that neighborhood. In cases where a neighborhood council does not demonstrate a proper reflection of its constituents, the city should reserve the right to deny certification and funding to the council. Lastly, the City of Los Angeles should do more to implement a living wage policy that affords workers the ability to support themselves and their families on what they earn.

Beyond additional programming and policy changes there are others ways in which Los Angeles could improve its approach toward livability. The first is to fully examine and articulate the benefits of the neighborhood method of attack. While it has become popular to champion the neighborhood ideal and the creation of community as the answer to our urban failures, it is essential that we better understand the precise ways in which a sense of community adds to better living conditions and provides social controls. What does community really supply? It has been argued that neighborhoods and communities represent a critical ground for social interaction and the realization of common values. Robert Sampson states that, "as such, they provide important public goods, or what many have termed 'social capital,' that bear on patterns of social organization and human well-being. There is hope in this conception, for it reveals ways to harness social change to reflect the nature of transformed (not lost) communities."[lxxxix]

However, little research has been conducted to answer these questions or to address "the transmission processes through which neighborhood effects operate.

Community social capital, in particular, is a construct that is much talked about but little studied in a rigorous manner."[xc] The City of Los Angeles could enhance the effectiveness of its planning process through research in this area. Most neighborhood level research up to this point has relied heavily on official data sources that seldom offer any insight into the relationship between neighborhood structure and social outcomes. This research primarily has focused on statistical data that often defines neighborhood by arbitrary land boundaries, such as census tracts, which do not correspond to social patterns. Sampson explains that "social definitions of neighborhoods are crucial because they derive from interaction patterns, which ultimately are the primary mechanisms through which neighborhood effects are transmitted."[xci] Therefore, Los Angeles and other cities should explore these issues in an attempt to shape public policy that responds to a focus on community social organization for the common good.

Additionally, while it is important for the City to conduct further research into what social processes and patterns shape the creation of effective neighborhoods, it is even more important that there is some way to evaluate the progress of livability initiatives. The most important step needed to create a more livable Los Angeles is the creation of some sort of checklist system that would serve to monitor growth and the outcome of these principles in order to ensure that equity is maintained over time. It is not enough to simply implement programs that promote livability. The City must also develop a way to generate empirical evidence that shows the extent to which these programs are effectively producing desired results and avoiding unwanted side effects. In short, there must be some sort of

program evaluation in order to ensure that the principles of livability are actually having their desired effects on improving standards of living. Peter Rossi explains that this type of program evaluation would be defined as:

> The use of social science knowledge, research strategies, and research methods to provide sound empirical information to aid in the design, improvement, and assessment of purposive communal actions. It draws on all basic social science fields and related applied fields. Purposive communal actions include governmental policies and actions of nongovernmental bodies in so far as they are directed toward communal goals.[xcii]

Additionally, a program is generally thought to be a set of activities that are designed to achieve certain outcomes, in this case, the principles of livability. Yet there has been little success in the development of a program evaluation that is applicable to community development efforts, such as the creation of livable neighborhoods.

There area a number of issues in evaluating the effectiveness of livability principles that make program evaluation difficult. Firstly, the City lacks a measurable outcome that can be translated into numbers as a means of evaluation. For example, when the City says that it hopes to maintain a diverse community in Highland Park through the application livability principles, how do they measure whether or not this is actually successful? They state that they intend to promote this by encouraging a range of housing types but they neither outline a specific target in the breakdown of income levels among residents nor do they offer an outline for the amount and variety of housing types desired in order to meet this goal. There is a need to note the presence or absence of a condition, in a quantifiable way, after the implementation of a program.

It also becomes difficult to evaluate success when discussing broadly defined goals such as the creation of livable neighborhoods or bettering the quality of life in an area. As Rossi explains there is likely no set of measurable outcomes that can fully address the widespread implications of programs such as livability. Since the target of any livability program is the community or neighborhood, there is inherent complexity in evaluating both the physical and social components. "Multiple outcome measures may be required," each aimed at one aspect of the larger livable community.[xciii] Further complicating the evaluation process is the length of time that is often needed to properly assess a program's effectiveness. Some benefits may not manifest themselves in the few years that are generally allocated to evaluation processes. Programs should be assessed only when fully matured and have had a chance to settle on an effective means of implementation. The most basic evaluation of a program is whether or not the changes produced are greater than those achieved in the course of action that would have occurred without it. In this sense, "a necessary condition for the success of an impact assessment is its ability to specify credible counterfactual conditions for the estimation of outcomes in the absence of the program being studied."[xciv] One thing the City does well is to identify, if only implicitly, what livable neighborhoods and associated programming is intended to accomplish and whom it is intended to benefit.

Yet the unique characteristics of any community development project, in this case the promotion of livable neighborhoods, make practical and credible evaluations difficult, although Rossi offers a few suggestions about how to improve this process. The first is the creation of small area data sets that would offer better

insight into the relationship between neighborhood structure and social outcomes. Rossi states that "it would be very useful for the [community development program] community and associated evaluators to have a thorough exploration of how typical administrative databases can be used to generate" this type of small area summary data. Because there is no standard measure to define neighborhood boundaries, it is also important to research how much empirical difference these small area databases could have in regards to framing the needs of a particular neighborhood. Furthermore, it is difficult to measure the success of a program aimed at improving social organization without a complete understanding of the effects of social networks. Rossi explains that "a serious deficiency in most [community development program] research is the absence of valid devices to measure social organization and therefore the ability to track changes in that aspect of community."

In conclusion, as we move away from the failed urban policies of the 20th century and recognize the value of the city as a humanizing force, the idea of the livable city presents itself as a model to combat these very problems and to restore the heart of the city not only for commercial and economic activity, but also for the revival and renewal of the essential social processes traditionally engrained within the urban center. Livable cities provide diverse groups of people the opportunity to partake in the urban experience once again by promoting an infrastructure of services, varied housing options, and work opportunities in close proximity. Additionally, they enable a range of prospects for social interaction, discourse, and meaningful community dialogue and can serve as the driving force of equitable social and economic vitality.

However, it is important to emphasize that the idea of livability should not be viewed as a universal remedy or standalone solution for our urban problems. It is naive to suggest that any policy, program, or school of thought can lead to a utopian model of urban life. It is both inherent within, and essential to the city, that it reflect all aspects of our society, both good and bad. Yet, instead of ignoring and trying to cover up the dichotomies of urban life, we should seek them out in an effort to understand what needs improvement and as a means to promote a democratic restructuring of our cities. The ideal city of comprehensive equality may never be fully realized, but by promoting the ideals of livability and applying its principles we can go a long way towards ensuring that as large a portion of the population as possible is able to enjoy a satisfactory standard of living. As we have seen demonstrated within both the broader framework of Los Angeles city planning, as well as in the neighborhood level of development in areas such as Highland Park, American cities are beginning to recognize the value of livable communities to the social and economic health of entire cities and regions. Overall, the City of Los Angeles does a reasonable job in promoting livability in new and existing developments but could accelerate its advancement through a number of progressive programs, initiatives, and policy decisions.

Appendix

Avenue 57 Neighborhood Specific Plan
Specific Plan Area

Proposed Metro Blue Line Station

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