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The Evolution of Place and Neighborhood Identity in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles

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Department of Architecture
Spring 2022

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Abstract

This research paper examines the relationship between place and identity by looking at the evolution of both in the specificity of the neighborhood of Boyle Heights, in Los Angeles, California. The role of the built environment and its evolution is tied to socio-cultural evolution in Boyle Heights in a narrative that emphasizes the systems of power and control that emerge through the lenses of dwelling and transportation infrastructure. Historical review of secondary sources, images, and graphics (like maps) serve to support the arguments made. The research paper focuses on Boyle Heights and Los Angeles during its interwar years, primarily examining the 1920s and 1940s, analyzing the continuities that these decades develop leading up to the 1960s and some of the issues that affect Boyle Heights today.

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There is nothing to consolidate in Los Angeles. What is more, to ‘consolidate’ would be to negate some of L.A.’s most characteristic attitudes and bestow value on permanence, in open contradiction to the changeable, unstable, mobile nature of the city.¹

Rafael Moneo, architect, on the nature of Los Angeles

¹ Rafael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 255.

Cities are a fascinating thing...

Growing up rural-adjacent, on the edges of a 60,000 person, mostly suburban town, my initial reaction to the vertical city (understandably so) was that of recoil, of disgust. Fifteen-year-old me could never see himself living in a place where there was too much noise, too many cars, too much trash, too little space, too little green...and too many people. It lacked space; it was too dense. I was accustomed to the detached single-family home on a lot, the 'American Dream' my parents had longed for in their countries and worked so hard to attain. I saw the density of living in the city with disdain. Four years of an architectural education and relevant experiences had allowed me to consider the implications, importance, and value of that initial reaction, and to reconsider my position in regards to the city. My education has allowed me to observe how the built environment and the way we occupy it is tied to perceptions of a constructed reality and how powerful those narratives can take hold in individuals and a culture.

The built environment of the city is an ever-expanding puzzle, an accumulation of the increasingly complex and evolving networks and infrastructures that people need for work, dwelling, and leisure. The city represents the complicated crystallization of countless human experiences colliding and intertwining, the result of a lived and experienced human culture and history. At any given moment, the city is in the flux of its evolution—it is never truly at a complete stop, but sporadically evolving. As people come and go, areas of the city begin to gather identities and associations based on both internal and external perceptions. A neighborhood's collective perception within the city almost always outlasts the specific people from whom the perception was derived.

In no city is change more than constant than in El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Ángeles de Porciúncula, better known as Los Angeles. From its Spanish colonial origins, Los Angeles has followed a mostly parallel history of development that cities in the United States have experienced, with the unique peculiarities that represent the people and history of the Southern California coast, ripe for attention and criticism. The imported image² of paradise on earth has brought waves of human migration to this 'sun-dappled, always-summertime' alternate reality in search of land, gold, oil, fame. Parallel to other United States cities, Los Angeles has had waves of development: massive growth in the late 19th century, urbanization and globalization in the early 1900s, a retreat from a 'blighted' city center in the mid-1900s, and a resurgence towards the city center by means of gentrification in the late 1900s and early 2000s. The city and its broader surroundings are sites of collision—of people, jobs, traditions, hates, fears.

² Nathan Masters, "A Brief History of Palm Trees in Southern California," last modified December 7, 2011, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/a-brief-history-of-palm-trees-in-southern-california>. Only one species of palm tree is, in fact, native to Southern California.

Boyle Heights is a place of bridges.
Stories crossing, stories never end.
From a broken past into the future.
A place to dream again...Dream again.
Boyle Heights is a place of colors.
Where strangers become friends.
From other worlds we meet across our fences.
Boyle Heights, a place we're free again...Free again.³
-- Nabuko Miyamoto, Japanese American poet and Boyle Heights resident

Nestled (a word chosen ironically) amongst the spaghetti tangle of Los Angeles freeways, the neighborhood of Boyle Heights is bounded by Washington Blvd. to the south, Indiana St. to the east, Mission Rd. and Valley Blvd. to the north, and the Los Angeles River to the west. This neighborhood directly east of downtown has a rich history of immigrant habitation, and in many cases has been the cauldron of transient from 'otherness' to 'American,' for Jew and Slav, Mexican and Japanese alike. It is in Boyle Heights that these groups have fought to create an identity for themselves in the continual struggle for cultural preservation and assimilation with "American-ness". Identifying this neighborhood as a site for investigation leads to the main question of my investigation:

What is the relationship between place and neighborhood identity, and how do demographic and physical urban changes reflect and influence that evolving identity?

The question comes from a desire to understand the reciprocal relationship between a neighborhood's impact on the people living there and the people's impact on the neighborhood. The research focuses on the afore mentioned neighborhood of Boyle Heights in East Los Angeles as a case study. This investigation will examine the historical continuities of a place and its identity through historical inquiry and secondary sources, relating qualitative data found in maps and diagrams to a narrative of historical continuity that encompasses dwelling, transportation, and a larger socio-cultural context to Boyle Heights as a way of examining identity. At its largest scale, this project aims to understand, at least in part, the infinitely complex social, cultural, economic, political, and physical factors that impact the patterns of how humans occupy space, and how those patterns evolve in context. As an architect, site is not often

³ *Lisa Ling's Take Out*, season 1, episode 5, "Boyle Heights," produced by Lisa Ling, David Shadrack Smith, and Helen Cho, released 2022, <https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYem4dwXI3cMDbAEAAAaz:type:episode>.

part of the scope of responsibility—merely a response to site and program. The use of Boyle Heights as a case study is an exercise in familiarizing oneself with a place without the leisure or choice of a thorough, lived experience, but instead through investigative research.

This investigation is limited in scope through various lenses: the first lens emphasizes Boyle Heights. Investigation of this particular neighborhood in Los Angeles allows for a more localized understanding of how global, national, and even regional circumstances affect and manifest in the specificity of a neighborhood's identity. More specifically, as people groups move in response to global, national, and regional conditions, what happens as different communities collide within new political, economic, or geographical conditions?

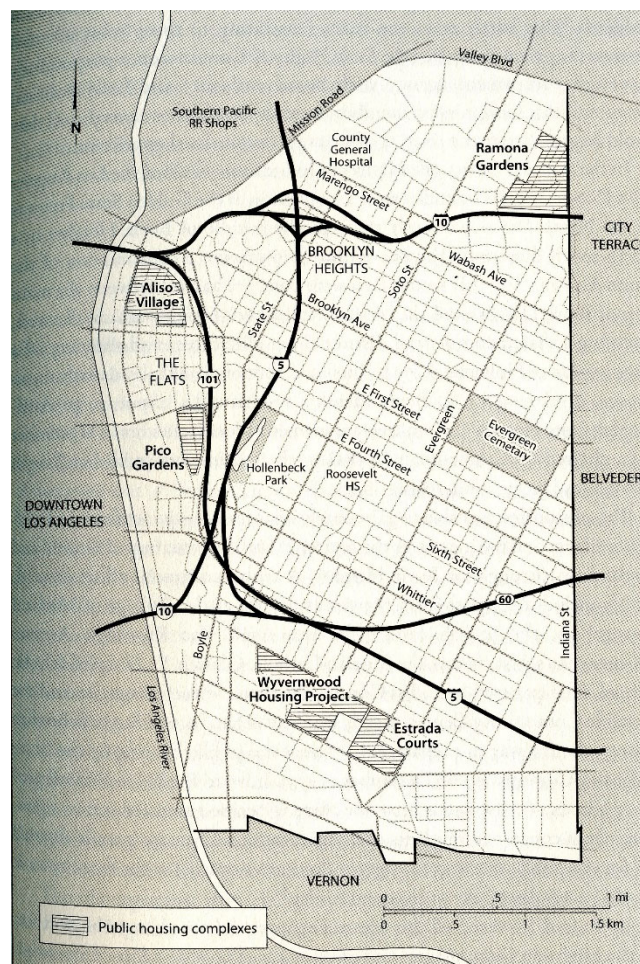


Fig. 1. Map of Boyle Heights with freeways and public housing projects. Image courtesy of Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy.

The next two lenses are intrinsically tied together; movement and stasis, transportation infrastructure and dwelling. In a contemporary reading of Los Angeles, the asphalt of the road is tied to the lawn of the suburban house. A crisscrossing of its complex arterial systems constantly brings in a stream of new arrivals to dense but dispersed centers of commerce, leisure, and living, slowly inching or rapidly flying towards their destinations. Relating changes within

dwelling and transportation infrastructure to a larger socio-historical-cultural-political-geographical context can reveal relationships that reflect on contemporary issues.

The final lens is the timeline of the investigation. The main body of text emphasizes Los Angeles two decades of history: the 1920s and the 1940s. During these decades, Los Angeles recovers from the First World War and experiences the challenges of the Second World War, experiences massive population and physical growth, and experiences massive social changes as different ethnic and racial groups mix and collide in this melting pot of a city. These decades exist as both consequences of their predecessor decades and as harbingers of their successive decades. The continuities that went on to affect Los Angeles in the 1960s and in contemporary times are addressed (at least in part) in an epilogue that ties together many of the issues discussed in the main body of text.

In the 1920s, post-WWI Los Angeles has established itself as a metropolis of trade, industry, arts, and political power on the West Coast and the United States. The Roaring '20s would have Los Angeles confront issues of monumental growth and migration and the subsequent challenges of infrastructure and housing. A gradual shift towards automobile-focused locomotion gains traction as dwelling patterns shift towards decentralization—both are factors which would affect Boyle Heights directly.

The 1940s find Los Angeles a (somewhat surprisingly) strengthened industrial force following the Great Depression. Suburban decentralization patterns set in the '20s would continue, and the conjunction of freeway construction, racially restrictive housing covenants, and public housing construction would reveal the racist attitudes and perceptions that would impact Boyle Heights' development. The impact of World War II would also serve to further reveal these racist perceptions as thousands of Japanese and Japanese Americans are forced to leave their homes for internment camps.

The 1960s are a time of counterculture and outspoken protest against the discriminatory circumstances that marginalized groups encounter in the built environment as well as the social environment in Los Angeles, all while local government uses the tools at their disposal to divide and discourage these communities, in the name of 'progress' and 'urban renewal.'

The '20s portion of the text speaks to the patterns set by the public streetcar lines and a shift towards the automobile, and their impact on Boyle Heights. It also speaks to Boyle Heights' development as a neighborhood as a result of its connection to downtown and aspirations to create a white Anglo American neighborhood (and its departure from those aspirations). It also speaks to a disconnect between the treatment of Mexicans despite a glorified, mythic Spanish Fantasy Heritage that exists in the time's contemporary 'pop culture' and its built environment. The '40s portion of the text speaks to the real and symbolic power of the automobile in Los Angeles and the effects it would have on Boyle Heights. Boyle Heights' poor political representation would mean that it suffered from the negative effects that its perception as multiracial would have on its physical fabric. Despite the negative impositions originating from

its multiracial nature, this would prove to be one of the community's strengths as groups came together in solidarity and support to begin to organize against the effects of oppressive forces. The concluding portion of the text reflects on how threads began in the '20s and '40s would result in the social upheaval of the '60s, and reflect briefly on how those threads continue to impact in the modern day.

This research evolved over the course of a semester, beginning with a handful of sources and a question and quickly evolving into a large body of source material. The challenge of the semester was finding the relevant information that would help me understand and create a body of work that related to the specificity of Boyle Heights, but also related to the larger physical and social landscape of Los Angeles.

Motivated by my fascination with the city and its perceptions, this project will correlate the urban development of Boyle Heights in its postwar years to larger regional, national, and global circumstances, analyzing the trends of the built environment and relating them to important social and cultural events of the '20s and '40s in order to investigate the changing relationship between a place and its identity, and the importance that internal and external perceptions have had on that identity and the production of an urban culture.

Literature Review

The question of my investigation is: what is the relationship between place and neighborhood identity, and how do demographic and physical urban changes reflect and influence that evolving identity? This question examines the relationship between a people's collective identity as perceived by themselves and outsiders, and the changing physical urban fabric in the case study of Boyle Heights. Dwelling and transportation infrastructure are essential in understanding the built environment of Boyle Heights as part of Los Angeles. Observations on two marginalized communities also occur: first, an examination of the effect of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage myth on Mexicans, and secondly a look at Japanese internment's effects on Boyle Heights' multicultural community. Under the framework of a traditional written scholarship, previous literature is built upon to create a new perspective. A wide array of sources was mined for elements that could be used to weave a comprehensive narrative that connects physical urban development with identity and its evolution.

Eric Avila's "The Sutured City: Tales of Progress and Disaster in the Freeway Metropolis" provides a look at the impact of freeway construction on the physical fabric of Los Angeles, the decline of the public space of Los Angeles streetcar lines, the way top-down entities used these tools to divide and as narrative tools, and the social conditioning effect of the freeways to ignore eyesores in the city. Gilbert Estrada's "If You Build It, They Will Move" offers a look at East L.A. (Boyle Heights included) and how it was directly impacted by freeway construction in postwar Los Angeles.

Dana Cuff's *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* serves to demonstrate the provisional nature of postwar Los Angeles ideals, providing information on a number of housing projects, including background on Aliso Village, constructed in Boyle Heights in the 1940s. The Historic Resources Survey Report of the Boyle Heights Community Plan Area offers qualitative information on Boyle Heights' physical development over time, chronicling remaining examples of historical dwellings, gathering places, institutional buildings, and other building types. The University of Richmond's *Mapping Inequality* tool provides access to primary sources on racially restrictive practices in the United States, Los Angeles, and Boyle Heights, providing firsthand description and surveying of the area of research. Sophie Spalding's *The Myth of the Classic Slum* finds and points out alternative narratives of multicultural and multiracial cooperation throughout history that contradict larger narratives of Boyle Heights as a 'slum.'

East L.A. Interchange offers a commentary on many aspects of the built environment (the impact of freeway construction on Boyle Heights), but more importantly offers insight into the evolution of Boyle Heights' identity through personal anecdotes and narratives. Ricardo Romo's *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* provides insight into Boyle Heights' evolution and provides specifics about Mexican and Mexican American identity and its evolution in Boyle Heights. William Deverell's *Whitewashed Adobe* emphasizes the evolution of Mexican and Mexican-American identity in Los Angeles as it encounters the mythic Spanish Fantasy Heritage, pointing out a dissonance between a mythic "Spanish" past and a "Mexican" present. The Common Brick Manufacturer's Association of America's "Homes of the Spanish Type" provides a primary resource for examining the impact of the mythic Spanish Fantasy Heritage of Southern California in the built environment of dwelling at the time. *Lisa Ling's Take Out* provides insight into personal experiences of Boyle Heights citizens (especially those of Japanese origin) and their observations about change in Boyle Heights.

George J. Sanchez's *Boyle Heights* book is the culmination of a career's worth of research about Boyle Heights, encompassing everything from Japanese internment's effect on Boyle Heights citizens to Jewish support for Mexican American Edward Roybal's election to the L.A. City Council, from Boyle Heights' origins as an Anglo American suburb to the present-day impact of gentrification. This source's vast variety of topics addressed made it the singularly most-used source.

Methods

Using this variety of historical primary and secondary sources allows me to weave a narrative that ties together these interconnected elements of dwelling and transportation infrastructure into both a larger social continuity in Los Angeles and the United States, but also the specificity of Boyle Heights as a neighborhood. The use of maps and other graphic elements allows for observation of physical evolution, and the use of images provide firsthand analysis of different elements of the time.

Boyle Heights, 1920s

The 1920s were an intense period of growth and change for Los Angeles. This tumultuous period of change in population and physical landscape would confront Los Angeles and Boyle Heights with the challenges that growth brings for a city. By the end of the decade, Los Angeles would have transformed from a modest-sized regional city to a metropolis, its population increasing from 580,000 to 1.2 million⁴, and its physical size increasing through the absorption of at least 34 unincorporated areas and five cities.⁵ By 1930, Los Angeles ranked first in the nation for movie production, second in the production of automobile tires, a third of the nation's air traffic, and more than a quarter of its workers engaged in manufacturing.⁶



Fig. 2. (left) "Fair maiden getting off streetcar, Broadway, Los Angeles," ca. 1912. *Image courtesy of the LA Almanac.*

Fig. 3. (right) Pedestrians in downtown Los Angeles in front of the Aliso line, ca. 1900. *Image courtesy of the LA Almanac.*

Downtown Los Angeles in the '20s was a bustle of noise and movement. Pedestrians, horses, horse-driven carriages, streetcars, and even the occasional automobile traveled the streets on their way to work, home, or spots of leisure. Movement is the first lens of analysis; as Los Angeles grew, the systems that served work, dwelling, and leisure would influence the way the city face the challenges of unprecedented growth. Since before the turn of the century, the streetcar had dominated as the primary means of transportation in Los Angeles. Los Angeles' streetcar lines would set the pattern for decentralized development in Southern California, creating the opportunity for outward sprawl. Of note, railroad and real estate magnate Henry

⁴ "Historical General Population: City & County of Los Angeles, 1850 to 2020," *Los Angeles Almanac*, accessed January 23, 2022, <http://www.laalmanac.com/population/po02.php>.

⁵ Leonard M. Pitt, "Los Angeles, California, United States," *Britannica.com*, last modified March 10, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Los-Angeles-California>.

⁶ Jules Tygiel, "Introduction," in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3.

Huntington's Pacific Electric Railway (PE) lines would grow to be the most extensive streetcar and interurban system in the world, "[linking] together and [assuring] the success of many farflung townsites."⁷ At its peak, the PE encompassed 1,061 miles⁸ and "dispatched 6,200 trains a day providing frequent, efficient, and high-speed service throughout the Greater Los Angeles region."⁹ Private and public investment in these systems would increase the accessibility and value of land owned in the areas surrounding Los Angeles, offering the Anglo American middle class access to a Southern-California-specific image of the American Dream:

*The streetcars played a pivotal role in the democratization of Southern California's suburban good life, as it sanctioned the dispersal of affordable housing. The interdependence of streetcar expansion and land development in Southern California allowed a vast influx of newcomers to combine the opportunities of urban life with a small-town sense of space and community.*¹⁰

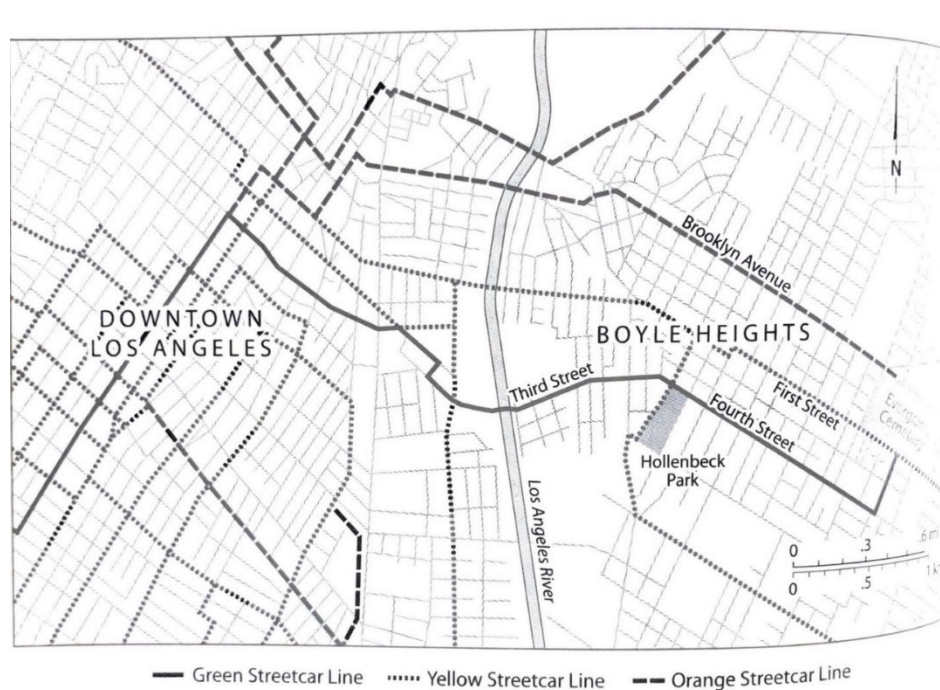


Fig. 4. Map of L.A. streetcar lines, ca. 1906. Image courtesy of *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy* by George J. Sánchez.

⁷ Arthur L. Grey, "Los Angeles: Urban Prototype," *Land Use Economics*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1959): 233, accessed April 10, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3144819>.

⁸ Adam Burns, "Pacific Electric Railway: 'Comfort, Speed, Safety.'" "Last modified March 16, 2022, <https://www.american-rails.com/pacific.html>.

⁹ Burns, "Pacific Electric Railway."

¹⁰ Eric Avila, "The Sutured City: Tales of Progress and Disaster in the Freeway Metropolis," in *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 188, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pntsk.11>.

The PE lines also provided access for many different groups to be able to move throughout the city for work as well as dwelling and leisure. For the racially and ethnically diverse population of Boyle Heights, the streetcar lines would be essential in providing them opportunities for work:

*[The streetcar lines] afforded access to employment opportunities among newcomers to Los Angeles...[streetcar lines] put more control and accessibility in their hands, enabling them to pursue various work opportunities. Mexican farmworkers living within proximity of downtown, for example, could seek employment in agricultural fields far removed from the city center.*¹¹



Fig. 5. A birds eye view of “Brooklyn Heights” (now Boyle Heights) and East Los Angeles in 1877. Image courtesy of University of Southern California Digital Library.

Prior to the ‘20s, Boyle Heights (a portion of it then named Brooklyn Heights) had benefited from the prospect of it being a “suburb of refined whiteness for the Anglo-American settlers from the East.”¹² As a consequence, Boyle Heights’ connection to downtown centers of commerce had already been established by 1920. A number of bridges spanned the not-yet tamed western boundary of the Los Angeles River; the 1872 Pacific Bridge Company bridge was the

¹¹ Avila, “The Sutured City,” 188.

¹² George J. Sánchez, “Making Los Angeles,” in *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 27.

first, followed by the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads, the Los Angeles & Aliso Avenue Street Passenger Railway, and others over the course of the next 50 years.¹³ Despite the physical connection to downtown and the real estate speculation, other areas like Pasadena had already offered clean water and transportation infrastructures sooner to middle- and upper-class Anglo Americans. As a result, Boyle Heights developers were “forced...to open the district to newcomers from various parts of the world without much constraint.”¹⁴ By the ‘20s Boyle Heights had departed from earlier predictions of its use suitable only for “agricultural and stock endeavors rather than a residential neighborhood.”¹⁵

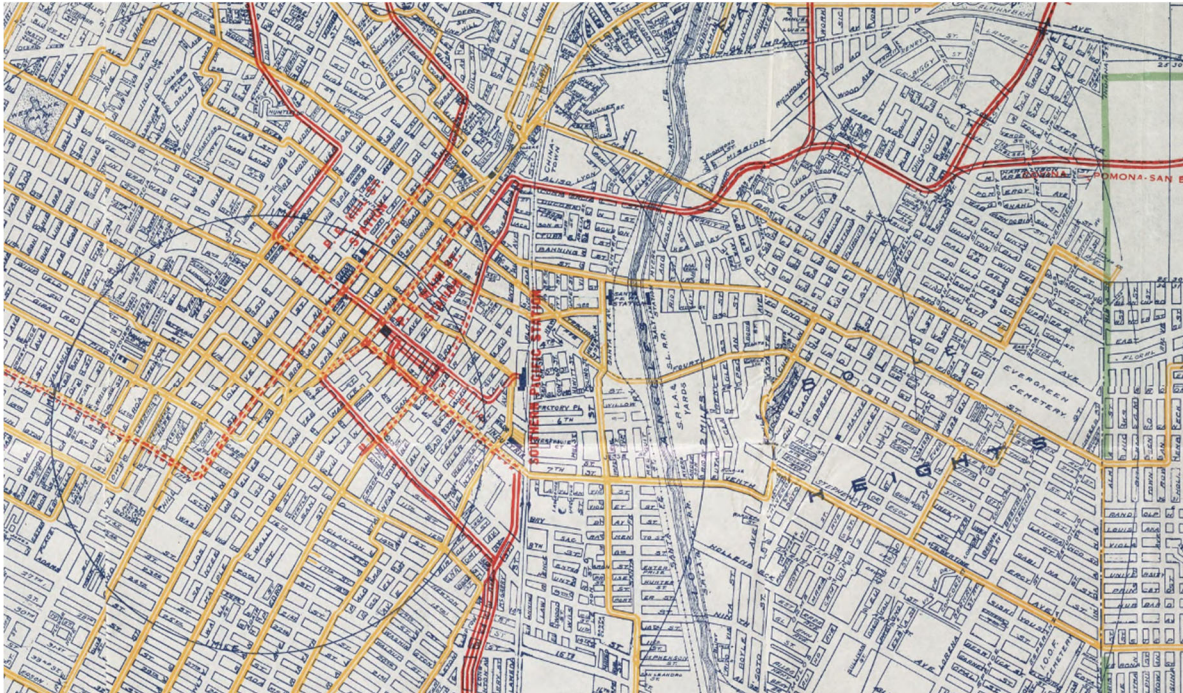


Fig. 6. Portion of Laura L. Whitlock's *Official Transportation and City Map of Los Angeles, California and Suburbs*, 1919. Circled is downtown Los Angeles, with Boyle Heights directly to the east. Image courtesy of UCLA, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, and the Online Archive of California.

Even as the ‘20s arrived, already there was a notable shift in the way people were moving. As early as 1915, Los Angeles County was the nation's leading county in automobile ownership.¹⁶ The freedom and mobility that the automobile offered at a relatively cheap price (specifically Henry Ford's Model T which debuted in 1908¹⁷) made it a viable alternative for upper- and middle-class families. The region's agreeable all-year weather was not the only convincing point, as the Los Angeles Times and other organizations pushed for the importance of the automobile through “The Pink Sheet,” devoted to automobile news, all the while campaigning against the

¹³ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 27-31.

¹⁴ Ibid, 32.

¹⁵ Ibid, 29.

¹⁶ Eric Avila, “The Sutured City,” 192.

¹⁷ Robert A. Laird and Thomas N. Sharrett, “The Economics of Evolution: Henry Ford and the Model T,” *Oikos* 119, no.1 (2010), 3, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27759816>.

streetcar¹⁸. As various types of traffic merged on the streets of Los Angeles, congestion quickly became a problem:

When it is considered that here exists the largest percentage of automobile ownership in the world...a total of 430,000 cars in Los Angeles city in 1923...the unscientific width and arrangement off streets, the improper use of existing space, the promiscuous mixing of various types of traffic all aggravate the problem [of congestion].¹⁹

The problem of congestion and the campaigning against the streetcar lines would help shift everyday transportation methods in the city. A 1924 study titled *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles* by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Harland Bartholomew, and Charles Henry Cheney, “assumed that the automobile would become the dominant mode of transportation in Southern California and marked the first planned conception of a unified system of freeways in the Los Angeles region.”²⁰

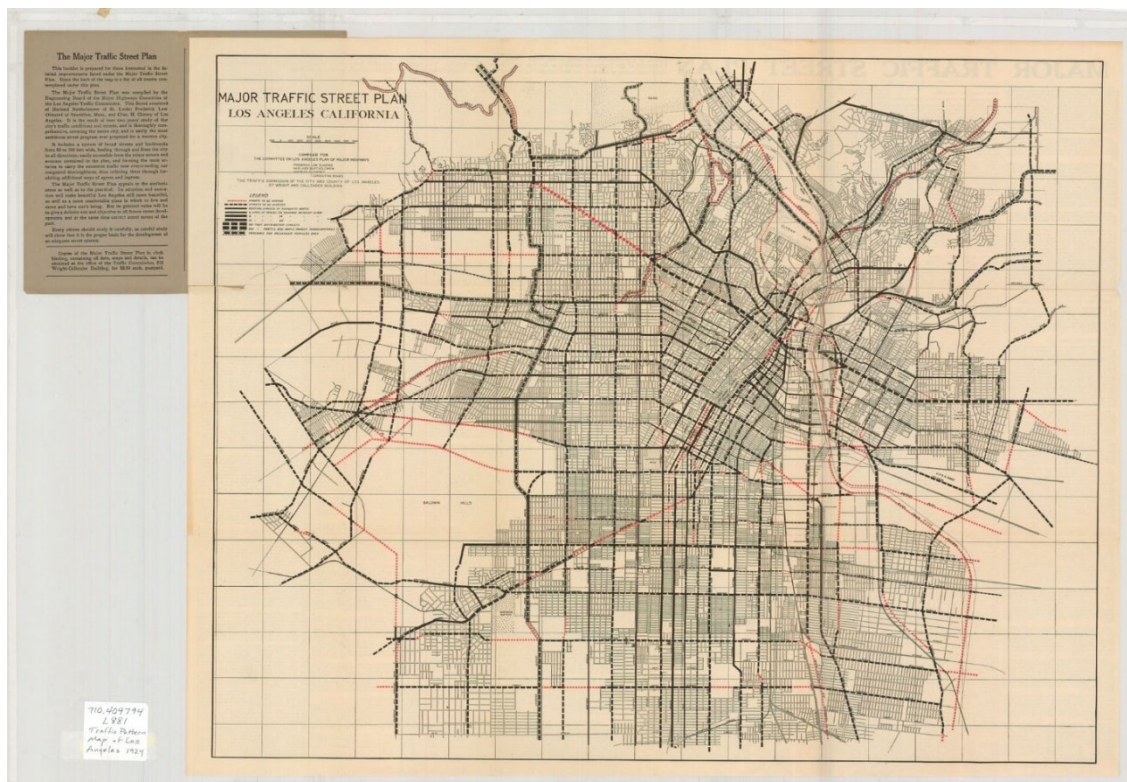


Fig. 7. Map from *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles, California*, ca. 1924. Image courtesy of the *L.A. Magazine*.

The trend of dispersal from the city center was not specific to the Los Angeles region: in California between 1920 and 1929, 20 new highways were enacted in legislation along with a

¹⁸ Avila, “The Sutured City,” 192.

¹⁹ Paul G. Hoffman, “The Traffic Commission of Los Angeles: Its Work on the Traffic Problem,” in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 116 (1924), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1015997>, 246.

²⁰ Avila, “The Sutured City,” 193.

vast number of existing road extensions. 1923 saw the enactment of the first gasoline tax (which were divided between the state and counties), and 1924 saw the proposition of the Federal Highway System naming coordination take shape.²¹ At the same time as the automobile was taking hold in the way people moved in the urban environment of the city of Los Angeles, it was expanding on patterns that would make Southern California a connected, interurban landscape ripe for decentralization.

Dwelling is the second lens of analysis. The combination of transportation infrastructure and dwelling is a reciprocal relationship that results in the built environment of a city, so the two are intrinsically connected. As previously mentioned, Boyle Heights had benefited from aspirations to create a white Anglo American community across the river, but those visions did not come to pass.²²

To imagine what these suburban intentions were meant to be, it is helpful to look at other examples of Anglo American suburbs to establish a point of comparison. A particularly close comparison is the city of Pasadena, south of the San Gabriel mountains and 10 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles. Without the challenge of the unbridled Los Angeles River, Pasadena speculators were able to take advantage of the clean water provided by mountain rainwater in 1874.²³ Suburbanization during this time took the form of a main street that was mostly commercial in nature, connected to small farm homesteads (or grand in some cases) in the surrounding area. The city center of Pasadena benefitted greatly from hotels, parks, and public institutions meant to “attract wealthy investors and upper-income future residents alike,”²⁴ in buildings like the Carlton Hotel and in the commercial venues along Colorado street (seen below).

²¹ Daniel P. Faigin, “Chronology of California Highways: Phase II: Early Growth (1915-1932),” last modified August 9, 2020, <https://www.cahighways.org/chrphas2.html>.

²² Sánchez, Boyle Heights, 30

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

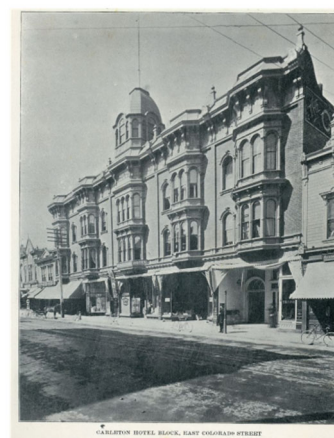


Fig. 8. (left) Colorado St. between Raymond and Fair Oaks St., ca. 1885.

Fig. 9. (right) Carlton Hotel Block, East Colorado St., ca. 1902



Fig. 10. (left) Dodworth Block, corner of Colorado St and Fair Oaks St., ca. 1902.²⁵

Fig. 11. (right) Traffic at the intersection of Colorado St. and Raymond St., ca. 1926.

Images courtesy of the Pasadena Public Library Digital Collection.

²⁵ Of note, a waiting room for the Pacific Electric line can be seen on the ground floor.



Fig. 12. View looking west on East First St., Boyle Heights, ca. 1890. Image courtesy of the LA Conservancy.

Figure 12 shows the intersection of Boyle Avenue and First Street, two of Boyle Heights' significant thoroughfares, just before the turn of the century. Built in 1889, the Victorian-style Boyle Hotel occupies the street corner. A lone streetcar approaches the hotel. More than any words, this image serves to demonstrate the aspirations that developers had for Boyle Heights' growth and status as a neighborhood in Los Angeles. In the late twentieth century it would become associated with mariachi musicians, and in the twenty-first, it would be reopened with 51 units of affordable housing and 3 ground floor commercial spaces.²⁶

Public spaces were also a component of both neighborhoods: in Pasadena, the Busch Gardens built by beer baron Adolphus Busch was visited by over a million people from 1906 to 1938.²⁷ A property of at least 30 acres, it had a "lake graced by white swans and fed by rills that run down the slope over many miniature waterfalls."²⁸

²⁶ "Boyle Hotel," *Los Angeles Conservancy*, accessed April 17, 2022, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/boyle-hotel>.

²⁷ Paul R. Spitzzeri, "La La Landscapes: Busch Gardens, Pasadena, 1923 and 1925," *The Homestead Blog*, June 26, 2017, <https://homesteadmuseum.blog/2017/06/26/la-la-landscapes-busch-gardens-pasadena-1923-and-1925/>.

²⁸ David Kipen, "Pasadena" in *Los Angeles in the 1930s: The WPA Guide to the City of Angels*, University of California Press (2011), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnt9t.39>, 262.



Fig. 13. Picture of the Busch Gardens in the Arroyo Seco area of Pasadena open to the public from 1906-1938, ca. 1923-25. Image courtesy of The Homestead Blog.

Boyle Heights had a park of its own: Hollenbeck Park. Consisting of 21 acres with a manmade lake, rolling hills, and picnic areas, it was property donated by Boyle Heights elite landowners to the City of Los Angeles in 1892.²⁹



Fig. 14. (left) bridge at Hollenbeck Park, date unknown. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library TESSA Digital Collection.



Fig. 15. (right) canoers enjoy the man-made lake at Hollenbeck Park, date unknown. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library TESSA Digital Collection.

²⁹ "Hollenbeck Park Bridge," *TESSA Digital Collection of the Los Angeles Public Library*, accessed April 14, 2022, <https://tessa.lapl.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/photos/id/84381/rec/7>.

The comparison of aspirations for an upper-class white Anglo neighborhood can especially be seen in the properties of the elites of both Pasadena and Boyle Heights. In Pasadena, Dr. Rudolph Schiffman's estate was famed for its variety of flora and fauna.³⁰ The influence of classical architecture can be seen even in the small snippet that shows his Neoclassical mansion surrounded by the planned, rectilinear lots of his gardens. In Boyle Heights, the estates of elites like William Henry Workman, son-in-law of Andrew Boyle (after whom Boyle Heights is named) and two-term Los Angeles Mayor are the counterparts to the Dr. Schiffman's. In the drawing, the vast estate is covered in arbors, and in the bottom righthand corner, a view of Workman's mansion can be seen, hidden by the trees as one approaches it. The drawing places the entire estate in the dramatic setting of a valley, enclosed by mountains in the distance.



Fig. 16. House and gardens of Dr. Rudolph Schiffman's estate, ca. 1920s. Image courtesy of The Homestead Blog.

³⁰ Paul R. Spitzzeri, "La La Landscapes: The Garden of Dr. Rudolph Schiffman, Pasadena, ca. 1920s," *The Homestead Blog*, February 24, 2020, <https://homesteadmuseum.blog/2020/02/24/la-la-landscapes-the-garden-of-dr-rudolph-schiffman-pasadena-ca-1920s/>.



Fig. 17. Drawing of William Henry Workman's property and house, ca. late 1800's. Image courtesy of Calisphere and the University of California Digital Collection

As mentioned previously, Boyle Heights did manage to ride a similar wave of early development in the late 1800s, as it began to be connected to downtown. Investors and the city's elite who had bought land during the Los Angeles City Council's 1865 auction knew that any improvement for the region meant that their investment became more valuable.³¹ William H. Workman, for example, used his influence to provide an irrigation system that would not only benefit the entire area of Boyle Heights, but increase the value of his own property.³² However, the late adoption of transportation infrastructure and clean water meant that Boyle Heights would end up open to many groups other than those it was originally intended for.

The building blocks of this neighborhood that existed before or were constructed in the 1920s—residential, commercial, institutional—many of these have come and gone in the century since. Some still remain, and give an idea of what life would have been like for Boyle Heights residents.

Schools are a significant marker of any community. Listed left to right: First Street Elementary School, 2820 E. 1st St., ca. 1915; Theodore Roosevelt High School, 456 S. Matthews St., ca. 1922. In the years to come, these schools would foster growth in children growing up in the

³¹ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 25.

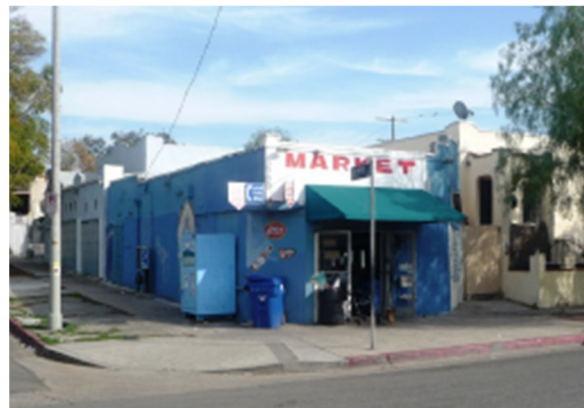
³² Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 27.

multiracial environment of Boyle Heights. These relationships fostered in these schools would result in a multiracial community that would be essential in creating a community that would stand together against oppressive forces in years to come.³³



Figs. 18-19. Schools in Boyle Heights. Images courtesy of SurveyLA.

The following buildings are commercial developments from the 1920s that are still standing, “constructed in an era that pre-dated the rise of the automobile and the popularization of one-stop supermarkets, neighborhood markets were built to a pedestrian scale and typically occupy small, vernacular buildings sited on corner parcels within residential districts.”³⁴ From left to right, top to bottom, these sites can be found at 3036 E. 5th St., ca. 1924; 2700 E. Pomeroy St., ca. 1928; 2842 E. Wabash Ave., ca. 1929; 1000 N. Clement St., ca. 1930.



³³ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 64.

³⁴ “Historic Resources Survey Report”, 31.



Figs. 20-23 Typical commercial neighborhood markets. Image courtesy of SurveyLA.

In addition to the houses of the original elite that still remain, some residential buildings from that time period can still be found one hundred years later. Listed from left to right are bungalow courts, a type of multifamily residential building type particular to Southern California: 445-455 S. Matthews St., ca. 1915; 620-624 N. San Benito St., ca. 1923; 2415-2417 E. Malabar St., ca. 1924.



Figs. 24-26. Bungalow court buildings. Images courtesy of SurveyLA.

A parallel to this kind of building type can be found in the recorded history of Boyle Heights, particularly in the Flats portion in the northwestern corner of Boyle Heights. From the turn of the century, the Cholo court “was a local development, consisting of a single parcel of land on which were grouped multiple buildings...frequently built in the rear of single-family homes.”³⁵ Tenants built homes with whatever materials were available. In housing commission reports from 1906-1908, these types of lots (often occupied by Mexican immigrant laborers and their families)³⁶ were condemned as “deadly to health and morals.”³⁷ The Utah Street Court and Aliso Street Court would be examples of the worst examples of living conditions for lower-class laborers:

³⁵ Sophie Spalding, “The Myth of the Classic Slum: Contradictory Perceptions of Boyle Heights Flats, 1900-1991,” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1904-), vol. 45, no. 2 (Feb., 1992), 108.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 127.

(in reference to the Utah Street Court) On this ground were sixty-eight houses of various styles of architecture and material, depending on the choice and ingenuity of the builder. Between four and five hundred people, including children, lived in this area, and for their convenience and accommodation they were supplied with seven water faucets and eight toilets, which were used promiscuously by both sexes. We who live in the better parts of town can scarcely realize that human beings could exist under such horrible circumstances. (Los Angeles, Housing Commission, *Report 1906-1908*, pp. 7-8)³⁸

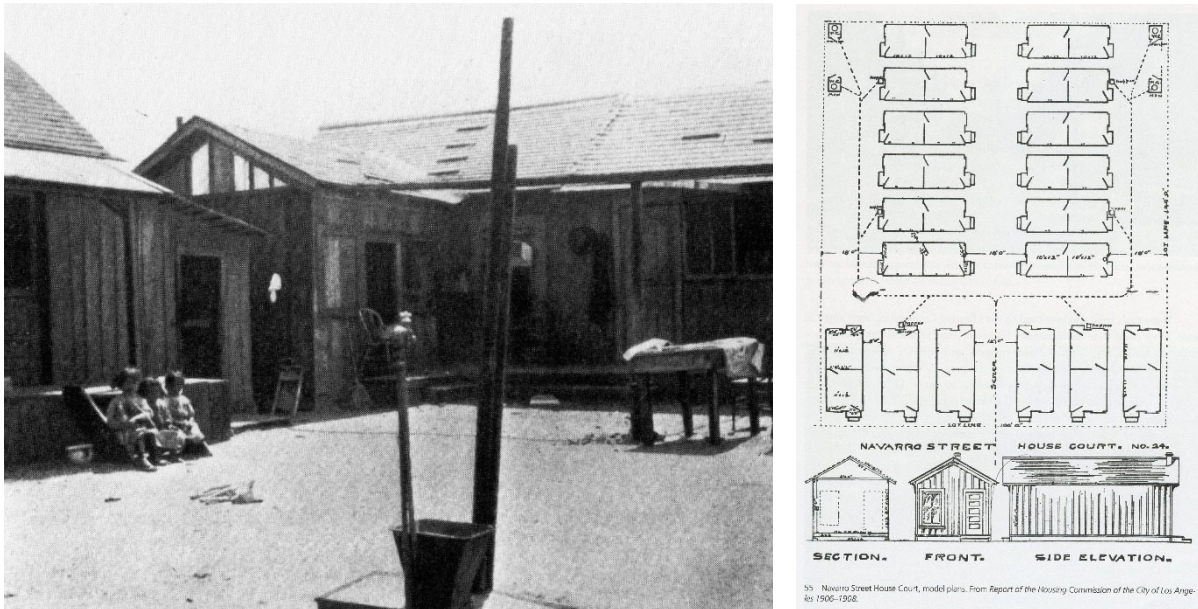


Fig. 27. (left) The notorious Utah Street Court with water hopper. Image courtesy of *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism*.

Fig. 28. Navarro Street House Court, model plans, proposed early solution by L.A. Housing Commission report. Image courtesy of *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism*.

By the 1920s, the Flats area had become home to a large number of Molokan Russians and other immigrant groups drawn to the area by cheaper rent rates:

Life in The Flats is a strange conglomerate of immigrant peoples living side by side though speaking a veritable babel of tongues. The outsider particularly notices the Mexicans...the Russian Molokans...Negro workmen, Jewish merchants, Armenian truck drivers, Japanese gardeners, barbers, tradesmen, all contribute to the common life of the Flats.³⁹

Pauline Young's description in her 1932 *Pilgrims of Russian Town* offers a view of a functional neighborhood atmosphere, as opposed to the classic derogatory view of The Flats as a slum. However, the 'reality' of common perception was that the detached, single-family home was the only place worth being called home.⁴⁰ This view of living conditions in The Flats, and county-

³⁸ Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 128.

³⁹ Spalding, *The Myth of the Classic Slum*, 110.

⁴⁰ Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 146.

wide fears of disease⁴¹ meant that in a post-Depression Los Angeles, areas like The Flats would become the targets for totalitarian housing schemes in the '40s.

Institutional buildings like churches are common ground for gathering and the creation of a community. Below are listed left to right some of these institutional buildings that retain integrity: Lorena Street Baptist Church, 1100 S. Lorena St., ca. 1920; St. Mary's Catholic Church, 407 S. Chicago St., ca. 1925; Los Angeles Japanese Baptist Church, 2833 E. Fairmount St., ca. 1926; Mexican Mission Church/Temple El Buen Pastor, 1524 E. Pleasant Ave., ca. 1930.



Figs. 29-32. Religious institutional buildings. Images courtesy of SurveyLA.

Already, the presence of a Japanese church offers evidence of a strong Japanese community in Boyle Heights, and the presence of a variety of faith groups around which communities would gather speaks to the different groups that called this neighborhood home.

While investigating dwelling, it is important to address an aspect that is particular to not only Los Angeles, but the entire region of Southern California. It can be seen manifest in the red tile roofing and white stucco façade of the St. Mary's Catholic Church on Lorena and the white stucco and building form of the Mexican Mission Church on Pleasant Avenue. The myth of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage is the idealization and utilization of the unpleasant past of Spanish

⁴¹ Ibid, 131. Tuberculosis and an outbreak of the plague in the '20s in Los Angeles commanded public attention.

colonization of the region, “sanitized and whitewashed, as a cultural tool, advertising gimmick, and a history lesson all rolled into one,”⁴² to use the words of William Deverell. The use of this mythology allowed (and arguably, allows) for groups in control to claim legitimacy from a culturally significant moment to demand a “contrived peace,”⁴³ all while ignoring the conditions of the marginalized descendants of the indigenous Mexicans. An event like the Fiesta de Los Angeles, organized first in 1894, a contrived history mythic in origin would be a “party [that] white Los Angeles threw to celebrate the triumph of Manifest Destiny in the Far West.”⁴⁴ Floats carrying dressed up Spanish *caballeros* in brilliantly colored costumes, indigenous Yuma Indians from Arizona representing the indigenous population, people dressed up as Aztecs, a Spanish galleon, a Mission float decorated with flowers brought to the New World by the Spanish padres⁴⁵—all these and more would yearly roam the streets of Los Angeles until its end in 1916.



Fig. 33. Fiesta de Los Angeles celebration in front of the Avila Adobe, the longest standing residence in Los Angeles, ca. 1931. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library TESSA Digital Collection.

⁴² William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 52.

⁴³ Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 59.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 64.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 55-62.

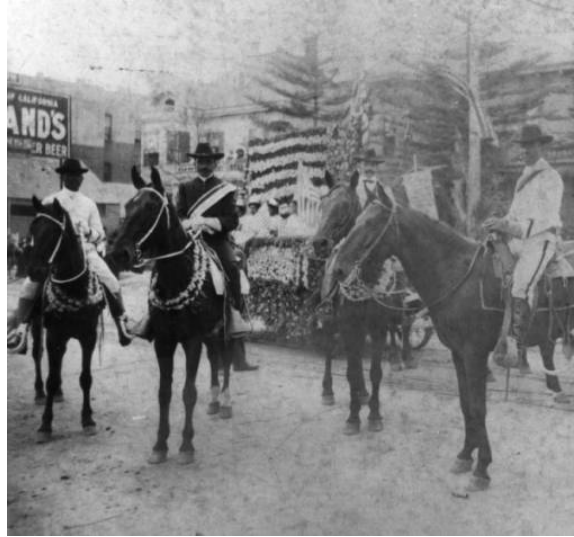


Fig. 34. Fiesta de Los Angeles, African Americans parade on horses, and a flower float can be seen in the background, date unknown. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library TESSA Digital Collection.

At the same time as significant cultural gatherings like the *Fiesta de Los Angeles* and *Fiestas Patrias*⁴⁶ (and in popular culture through texts like Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*⁴⁷—in both its text and theatrical performance—and in John McGroarty's *The Mission Play*⁴⁸), indigenous natives and Mexicans were being excluded from the built environment in Los Angeles neighborhoods. The Common Brick Manufacturer's Association of America's "Spanish Homes" catalog publication of 1925 offered homebuyers a:

*genuine whiff of the atmosphere of Southern California where three centuries ago the adventurous Spanish padres were laying the foundation for an architecture which is just now coming happily into its own.*⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 151. Vocal protest would exist against events like the *Fiestas Patrias* (Fatherland Festivals) by groups like the Confederated Mexican Societies of California in petitions: "Year by year a group of individuals sheltered under the name of Spanish American Societies takes advantage of our national festivities to exploit the good faith and high patriotic sentiments of the Mexican colony in this city, organizing festivities which have no other object than profit of a small number of persons."

⁴⁷ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 26.

⁴⁸ Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 207-249.

⁴⁹ "Homes of the Spanish Type," Common Brick Manufacturer's Association of America, 1925, <https://archive.org/details/HomesOfTheSpanishType/mode/2up>.

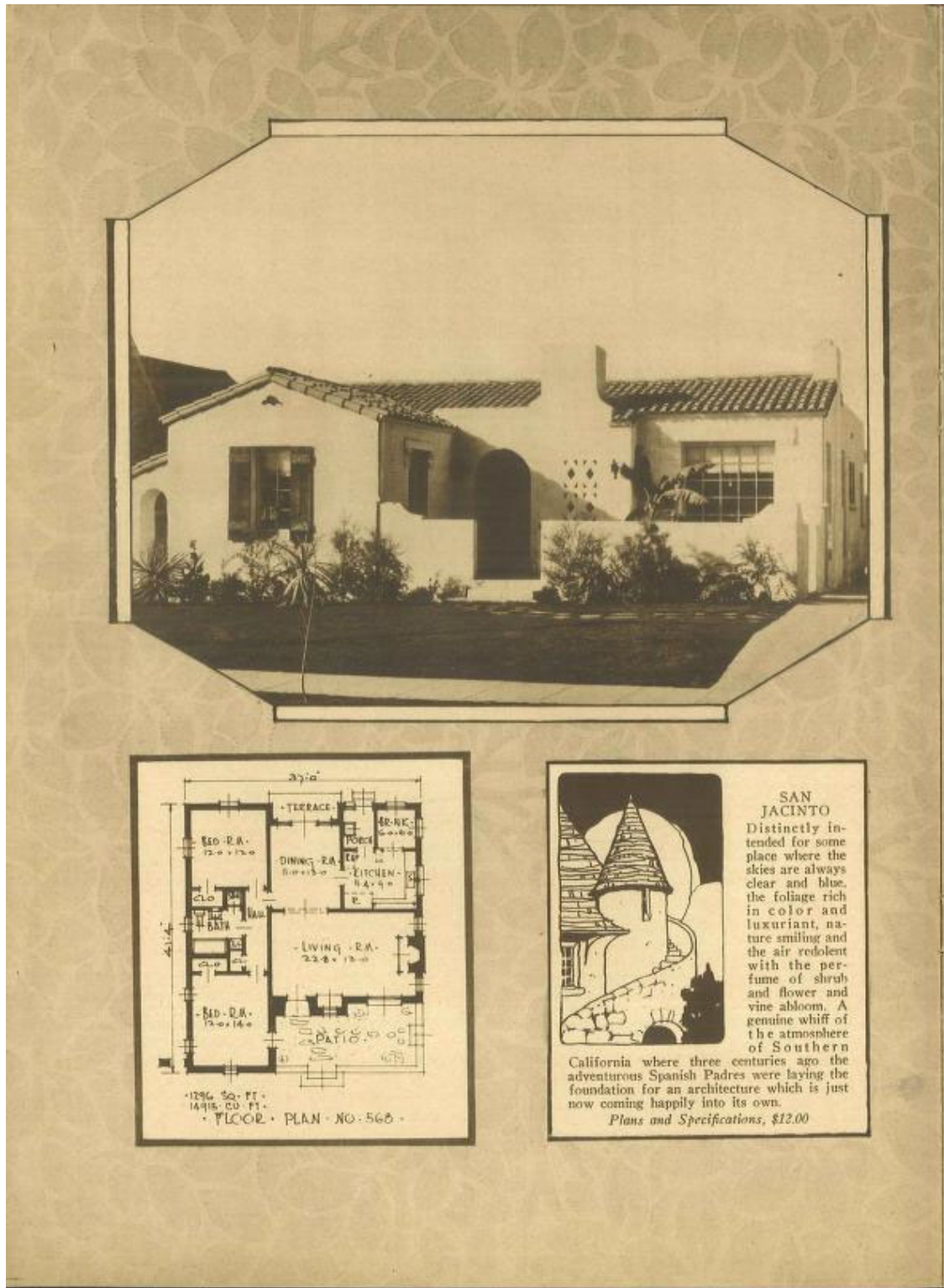


Fig. 39. Spread from *Homes of the Spanish Type*, published by the Common Brick Manufacturer's Association of America, 1925. Image courtesy of *Archive.org*.

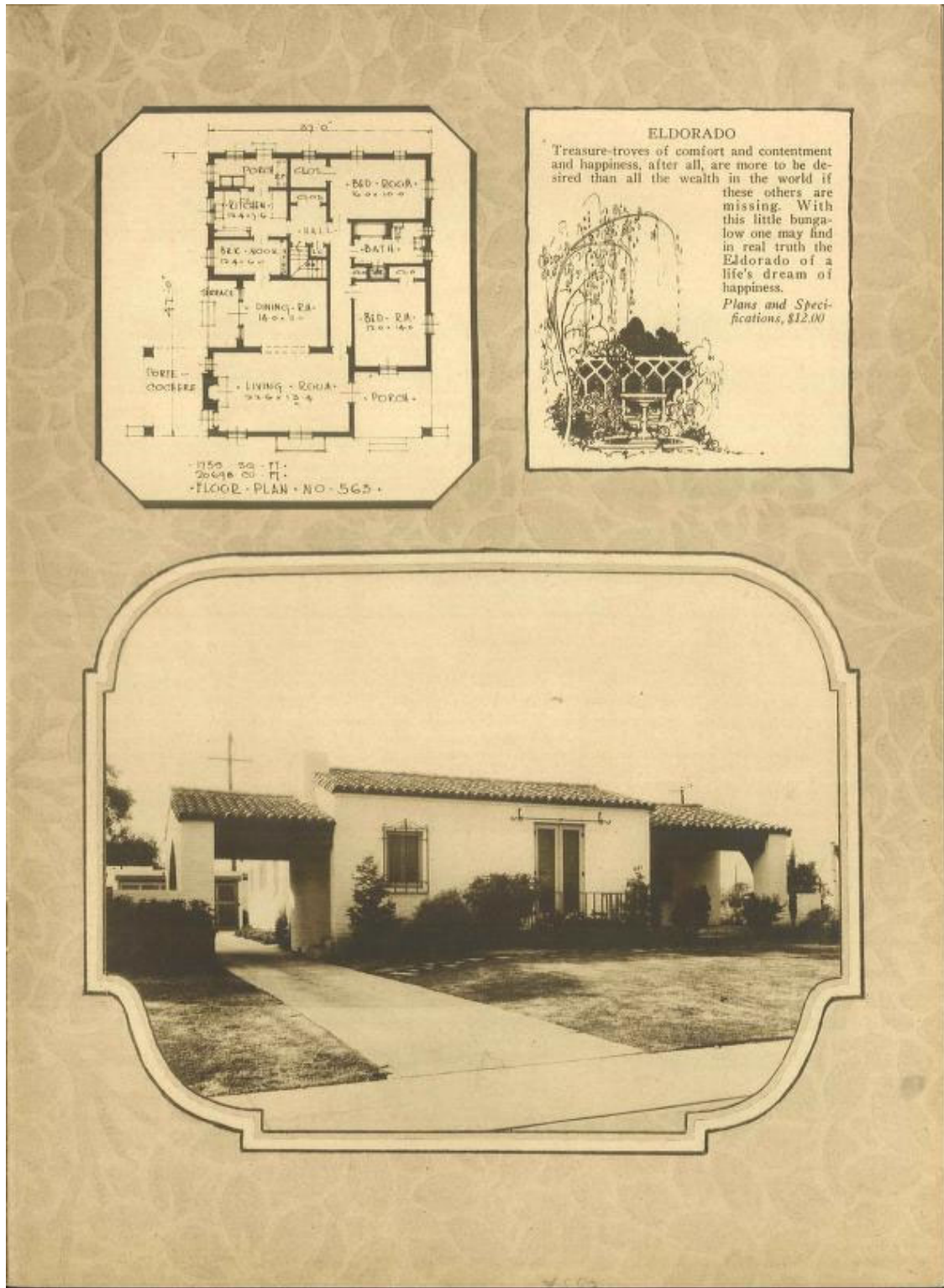


Fig. 40. Spread from *Homes of the Spanish Type*, published by the Common Brick Manufacturer's Association of America, 1925. Image courtesy of Archive.org.

As a mythic association with Spanish colonization was being created in the built environment, at the same time, countless Mexican families were toiling away in the close-quarters housing⁵⁰ of the Simons brickyards seven miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles, producing as many as 160,000 bricks a day,⁵¹ an obvious disconnect from a “Spanish past” and a “Mexican present.”⁵²

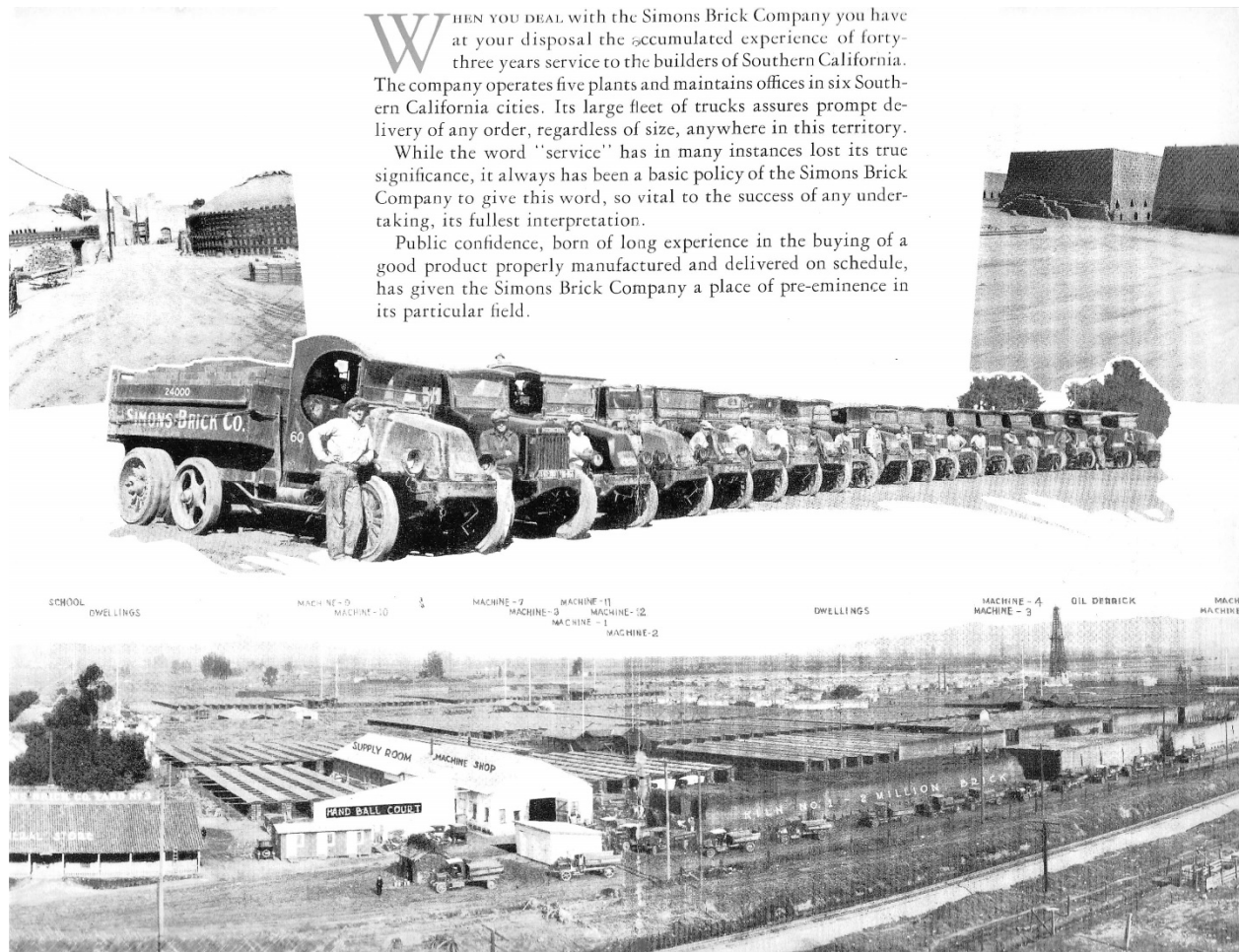


Fig. 41. Promotional material for Simons Brick company, ca. 1920s. Image courtesy of the LA Almanac and the Montebello Historical Society.

The racially motivated repatriation efforts in the ‘20s against Mexican immigrants speaks volumes towards this idea of “Spanish past” but “Mexican present.” Large numbers of immigrants, many of them drawn to the region by “low wage jobs in the areas of service industries, transportation, and agribusiness,”⁵³ settled in Los Angeles and many within the

⁵⁰ Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 143.

⁵¹ Ibid, 135.

⁵² Ibid, 139.

⁵³ Douglas Monroy, “Making Mexico in Los Angeles” in *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 161.

confines of Boyle Heights. Encountering systematic racism in racially restrictive housing and a collective culture, the result was a pride in their homeland:

*Community opinion pressured people away from naturalization: "Senor S.G." explained, "I have a store in the Mexican district. If I become a citizen of the United States the Mexicans wouldn't trade with me, because they wouldn't think that I was fair to them or loyal to my country. I read the papers and would like to vote, but I must not become a citizen. I have to have the Mexican trade to make a living."*⁵⁴

*The 1920 census shows that among all ethnic groups in California, Mexicans had the lowest rate of naturalization. Out of a total 60,546 foreign-born Mexicans living in the state, 889. Percent had kept their alien status. Only 5 percent (3,008) had become American citizens by 1920.*⁵⁵

In both the interview and in the physical data discussed above, it becomes apparent that the Mexican community was having its own struggle with internal perceptions about their status as immigrants and citizens, as Mexicans and Americans. While the Mexican community was having its own struggles with its identity as Mexicans in America, the value of their presence was constantly being contested by outside forces. The Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924 (which contributed significantly to the assimilation of European immigrants through increasing the rate of naturalization) excluded Mexicans, meaning most first- second- and even third-generation Mexican Americans maintained strong attachment to Mexico.⁵⁶ This slow assimilation came back to haunt the Mexican community as the Great Depression hit the United States in 1929. With recruiters' preferences for Anglo American workers, Mexican laborers increasingly found it more difficult to find work. In combination with poor political organization, high visibility in segregated communities, and social and cultural disconnects⁵⁷, Mexicans became

*the target for immigration raids that touched the lives of at least one of every three Mexican families...Los Angeles became the first city to employ local and federal tax funds for the purpose of repatriating Mexicans. By 1935, some 500,000 had been repatriated nationwide; the largest share of those deported had resided in the "City of Angels."*⁵⁸

Specifically in Boyle Heights, the numbers are also significant:

Not surprisingly, when [Los Angeles County] officials initiated their repatriation campaign they headed straight for Mexican indigents in the Flats area of Boyle Heights...I have identified 567 individuals from 125 families repatriated from Boyle Heights from 1931 to 1933...it is likely that many more individuals were repatriated from

⁵⁴ Monroy, "Making Mexico in Los Angeles," 163.

⁵⁵ Romo, *East Los Angeles*, 160.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 11.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 162.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 162.

the area. Nonetheless, I estimate that the Flats area remained the main zone of “repatriation” from Boyle Heights and one of the most significant targeted areas in all of Southern California.⁵⁹

As the decade came to a close, nationwide developments would set the stage for the '30s; most significantly, the Great Depression would be a nationwide and globally felt impact, an economic situation that would affect the cultural and social status of different people groups and the physical spaces they lived and inhabited across the nation, Los Angeles, and Boyle Heights.

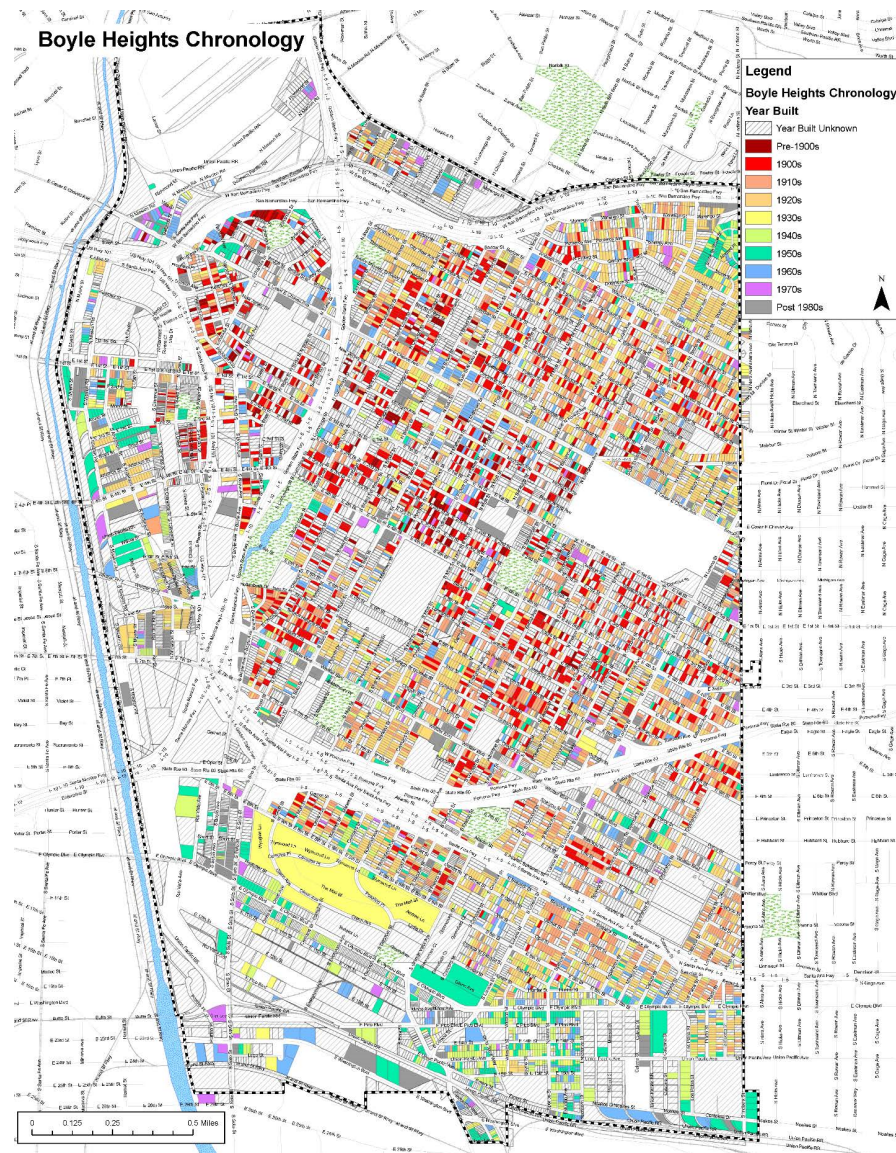


Fig. 42. A chronological map of the development of Boyle Heights; development pre-1900s and through the 1920s (ranging from dark red to orange) is a significant portion of the modern-day map. Image courtesy of the SurveyLA Historic Resources Survey Report of the Boyle Heights Community Plan Area.

⁵⁹ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 73.

Boyle Heights, 1940s

Significant moments and markers of the 1940s that occurred in Los Angeles and Boyle Heights were born from larger national patterns, taking on the particular flavor these areas' geography and culture bring. Worldwide tension at the onset of World War II, regional and national racial tensions, patterns of migration—factors like these and countless others would impact Boyle Heights directly during the 1940s, transforming how the neighborhood moved and lived.



Fig. 43 Emil J. Kosa, *Freeway Beginnings*, ca. 1948. Image courtesy of the Buck Collection at UCI Institute and Museum of California Art.

Emil J. Kosa's *Freeway Beginnings* sets the tone for Los Angeles in the 1940s, a provocative statement about things in the making, promising connection from a desert landscape towards the brightly colored density of Los Angeles in the distance. City Hall dominates the center of the painting, stands tall above everything else, hazy in the distance, its perspective forced. Movement through transportation infrastructure is again the first lens of investigation, a critical element in the urban development of cities.

As previously stated, by the end of the '20s, the streetcar was starting to decline in favor of the automobile. The impact of the automobile is essential in understanding the urban development of Los Angeles. Today, the city cannot be referred to without understanding the real and symbolic power that the automobile came to provide for Los Angeles.

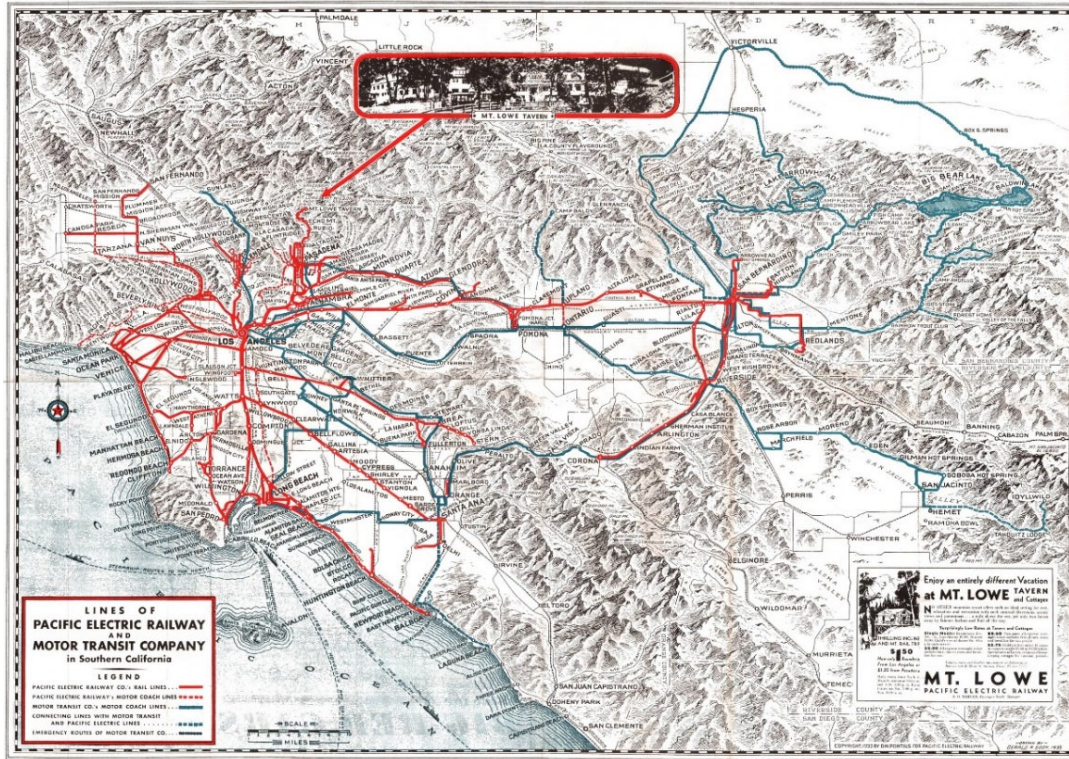


Fig. 44. Pacific Electric Railway lines (red) and Motor Transit Company lines (blue), ca. 1935. Image courtesy of *Americanrails.com*.



Fig. 45. 'The Stack,' postcard ca. 1949-1960. Published by Colombia Wholesale Supply, North Hollywood, California. Image courtesy of the *LA Almanac*.

The streetcar system in years past had successfully connected the denser city center of Los Angeles with its surrounding areas, Boyle Heights included. As the automobile gained traction, these systems became more and more obsolete. Eric Avila remarks on the disrepair of the streetcar and the impact it had on communities like Boyle Heights:

By 1934, the former company's [Pacific Electric Railway and the Los Angeles Railway] overall patronage had dropped by one-third from its 1929 figure of 107 million. By 1941, a Works Program Administration (WPA) guide to Los Angeles noted the decrepit state of public transportation in Southern California: "Cumbersome, old-fashioned trolleys still rattle through the streets. The interurban service is incredibly slow and antiquated. Travel on public conveyances is often a distinct inconvenience because of long waits and overcrowding."⁶⁰

Just as much as the advancement of the streetcar systems had to do with financial opportunities in real estate speculation, the disrepair of these systems (at least in part) stemmed from economic gains to be made in the automobile industry. Much more than the public streetcar systems, the automobile was a pricey investment (although much more affordable by the '40s) that ensured a flow of taxable revenue where repairs were shouldered by the private citizen. Boyle Heights, whose connection to the city center in the '20s would result in increased density and commercial opportunities, would be impacted by the decline of the streetcar system, much like other peripheral neighborhoods in Los Angeles:

...the residents of Watts during the 1920s and '30s enjoyed easy access to the disparate points of work and leisure within the larger urban region...the demise of the PE...had dire consequences for communities like Watts and Boyle Heights, which became isolated centers of racialized poverty in the subsequent age of the freeway.⁶¹

In the transition from the public space of public transportation, there was far less room for interclass and intercultural interaction. In the safety of the automobile, there was far less room for interclass and intercultural interaction, whether those interaction be rooted in "social harmony...[or]...racial confrontation."⁶² The decline of the streetcar would mean that not only did work opportunities decline for lower-class citizens and immigrants, but the public space that allowed for an awareness of the heterosociality of Southern California was disappearing.⁶³

As the streetcar declined, the automobile declined, the automobile gained traction as a tool and as a symbol. Nationwide, the affordability promised by the beginning of mass-produced automobiles in the '10s (an industry that would boom in the following decades) granted the American middle-class access to the luxuries of the person automobile. Federal and local investment in public infrastructure, especially during New Deal investments designed to create

⁶⁰ Avila, "The Sutured City," 193.

⁶¹ Ibid, 189.

⁶² Ibid, 190-192. Avila describes instances of both harmony and discord on the streetcars, a reminder that "the public spaces of the industrial city harbored peril as well as pleasure." He retells witness' memories of jam sessions on the way downtown between musicians. He also tells the story of a cheering crowd surrounding a trolley as US Navy sailors attacked Mexican and Black youths in the car during the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943.

⁶³ Ibid, 192.

jobs and combat the effects of the Great Depression, meant that the hordes of working-class groups arriving in Los Angeles found a powerful industrial economy willing to put them to work. With this workforce, the ambitions of previous plans (like the 1924 Olmstead and Bartholomew plan⁶⁴) could be adapted and implemented to connect Southern California and Los Angeles.



⁶⁴ Ibid, 193.

⁶⁶ Faigin, “Chronology of California Highways: Phase III.”

The pressure to address these local issues led to the drafting and creation of legislation in the Collier Burns Act of 1947. A self-perpetuating machine, the Collier Burns Act created a system where, “automobile usage financed freeway construction and freeway construction financed encouraged the use of automobiles.”⁶⁷ This machine would pave the way for freeway construction to grow in future decades, significantly affecting the expansive sprawl of Los Angeles.

It was 1945 when they started building it, when they completed the freeway. They moved out practically the entire Russian community. It was—that whole area right there was Russian, uh, homes, and, um, that affected us. I would have loved if everything had stayed the same. There was like a Russian church and a Russian market on every other corner...I even could speak a little Russian in my youth, you know? ⁶⁸

As early as 1944, the first portion of the Santa Ana 5 Freeway opened, marking the beginning of the impact that freeway construction would have on Boyle Heights and its neighbor East Los Angeles.⁶⁹ In the following four years, industrial built fabric was being preserved as 200 residential buildings were being destroyed.⁷⁰ Over the course of the next few decades, Boyle Heights would suffer from the crisscrossing of freeways, implemented strategically to divide with disregard to existing communities. Where Boyle Heights, unfairly represented in local government (“with the exception of Roybal, no Mexican served on the Los Angeles City Council until Richard Alatorre gained a seat in 1985...and no Mexican served on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors until Gloria Molina joined it in 1991⁷¹), couldn’t stand against the force of local government, other better-represented neighborhoods could object to or forestall such infrastructural changes. In the decades to come, the construction of freeways would culminate in the creation of the East Los Angeles Interchange, in the vicinity of Soto Street, Boyle Avenue, and Marietta Street, causing wonton destruction of people’s “church attachments, their family homes, and their childhood experiences in Boyle Heights.”⁷²

⁶⁷ Avila, “The Sutured City,” 198.

⁶⁸ *East L.A. Interchange*, directed by Betsy Kalin, (2015; Los Angeles: Indie Rights), <https://www.amazon.com/East-Interchange-will-i-am/dp/B07STVS7NY>. Quote by Floyd Jeter Jr.

⁶⁹ Gilbert Estrada, “If You Build It, They Will Move: The Los Angeles Freeway System and the Displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles, 1944-1972,” *Southern California Quarterly* vol. 87, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 290.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 300.

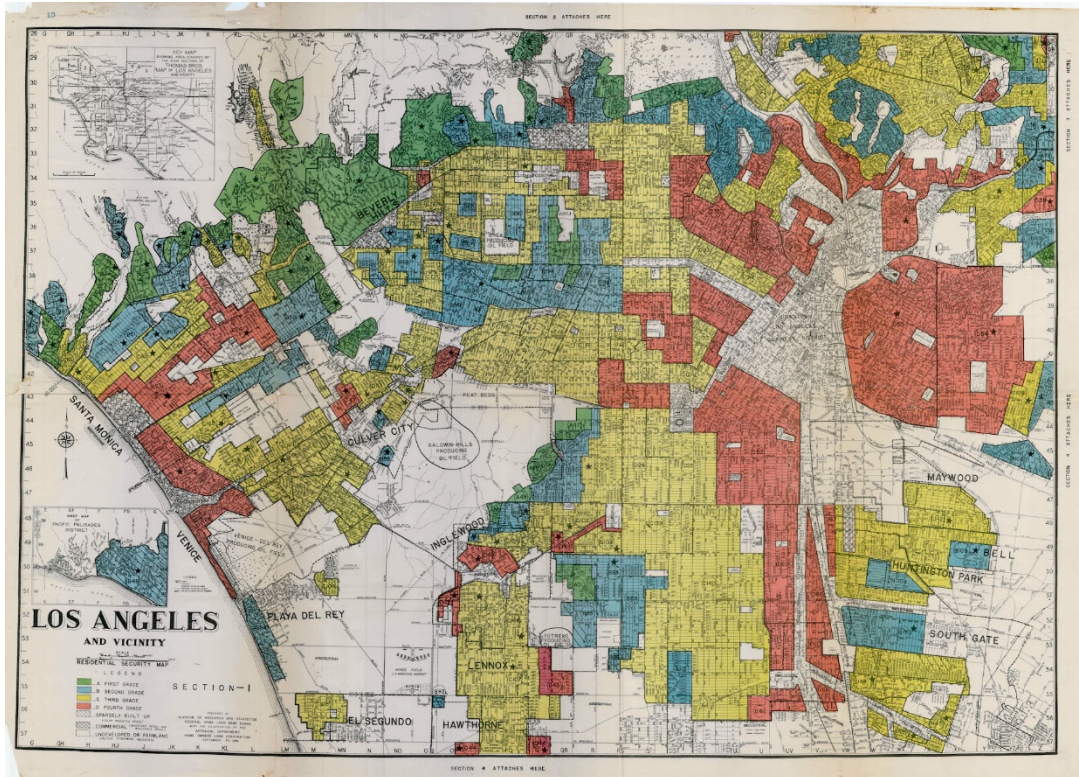


Fig. 47. A Federal Housing Authority-sponsored survey, the Home Owner's Loan Corporation 'redlining' map of Los Angeles and its vicinity, ca. 1939. *Image courtesy of UCLA and the Jewish Histories in Multiethnic Boyle Heights Digital Exhibit.*

I was eager to get out and on my way. Boyle Heights is fine, but when you got out of Boyle Heights, Boyle Heights was comparable to a Watts today. It was a denigrated, mixed immigrant, working-class neighborhood—whether it actually was or not, that was the reputation it had. And I felt the effects of that.⁷³

Harriet Rochlin, Author and Western Jewish Historian

By 1940, the population of the City of Los Angeles numbered over 1.5 million, with the larger Los Angeles County's 2.7 million accounting for 40.3 percent of the population of the State of California. By 1950, those numbers would grow from over 1.5 million to over 1.9 million, and from 1.7 million to 4.2 million in the Los Angeles County area.⁷⁴ With the pattern of dispersal initiated by the streetcar lines and encouraged by the increase of paved roads, Los Angeles suburbs would grow to be the biggest receiver of newcomers to Los Angeles.

Two of the biggest factors to influence dwelling in Boyle Heights (aside from the impact of increasing freeway construction mentioned above) were racially restrictive covenants and public housing projects. Both of these issues would continue to set the patterns for the events that would develop in the '60s.

⁷³ *East L.A. Interchange*. Quote by Harriet Rochlin.

⁷⁴ "Historical General Population," *Los Angeles Almanac*.

The map above shows the Federal Housing Authority (FHA)-sponsored survey by the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC). Produced for cities all across the country, the purpose of a 'redlining' map was to create a set of standards for assessing mortgage risk, compiling the results in a rating system from A to D, with A (in green) being the most desirable and D (in red) being the least desirable.⁷⁵ In Los Angeles, only 12 percent of areas surveyed achieved the A "Best" rating, with 20 percent receiving a B "Still Desirable," 46 percent receiving a C "Definitely Declining," and 22 percent receiving a D "Hazardous." Boyle Heights was one of these neighborhoods classified as D, "Hazardous." The HOLC description of Boyle Heights reads:

This is a "melting pot" area and is literally honeycombed with diverse and subversive racial elements. It is seriously doubted whether there is a single block in the area which does not contain detrimental racial elements, and there are very few districts which are not hopelessly heterogeneous in type of improvement and quality of maintenance.⁷⁶

This description demonstrates the racially discriminatory nature of a collective society that found its way into legislation, and is reflected in the built environment and demographics. Produced in 1939, these federal recommendations would heavily affect Boyle Heights in its racial makeup. The '40s (and even before then) were an interesting transition nationally in understanding race and ethnicity. During this period, ethnic whites like Russians, Polish, Jewish, and others were moving away from their previous status as 'non-white,' and this was reflected in changing legislation for racial classification.⁷⁷ This shift meant a change for Boyle Heights:

...when those people did have choices and options, they did choose to leave Boyle Heights and go live in other places.⁷⁸

We think of white flight as simply all of a sudden people don't want to live next door to other people. The truth is that the government subsidized white flight, that it was financially more difficult to stay in some of these neighborhoods for whites that had other options...[The HOLC] give[s] Boyle Heights the lowest possible ranking. Its listing is red principally because it is multiracial. So if you're a returning serviceman, Jewish, trying to start a family, it is likely to cost you more to purchase a house in Boyle Heights—even the same house as the San Fernando Valley, because the San Fernando Valley, mostly white, is given the best rating. So actually, to get a new mortgage is cheaper, out in this new area that's seen as homogenous and not risky as opposed to Boyle Heights, even if that's the community you grew up in.⁷⁹

These racially restrictive methods lead to an exodus for now-white groups that are able to find new housing opportunities. In the case of Jews, new neighborhoods are finally opened up to

⁷⁵ Ryan Reft, "Segregation in the City of Angels: A 1939 Map of Housing Inequality in L.A.," last modified November 14, 2017, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/segregation-in-the-city-of-angels-a-1939-map-of-housing-inequality-in-l-a>.

⁷⁶ "Los Angeles, CA: D53," *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America*, accessed February 27, 2022, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=11/34.012/-118.449&city=los-angeles-ca&area=D53>.

⁷⁷ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 132.

⁷⁸ *East L.A. Interchange*. Quote by Laura Pulido.

⁷⁹ *East L.A. Interchange*. Quote by George J. Sánchez.

them, and Boyle Heights goes from having at least 50,000 Jews in the early '40s down to 14,000, a decline of at least 72 percent in less than 15 years.⁸⁰ For other non-white communities like Mexicans, restrictive covenants continued to exclude: "...groups like Los Feliz Improvement Association and the University District Property Owners Association helped establish zoning restrictions that barred Mexicans and other minorities from entering Caucasian communities."⁸¹

Racially restrictive practices like the ones described above weren't the only disruptive change to impact dwelling Boyle Heights. The introduction of public housing projects would also affect various communities within Boyle Heights. By the end of the '40s, the concept of urban renewal had taken hold in the United States. While sprawl patterns continued as those who had the means distributed themselves to the periphery in suburbs, lower-class populations with a lack of upwards mobility found themselves under attack.

Empowered by the Housing Act of 1937 (which sought to curtail poor housing conditions post-Depression), local and federal housing officials saw their opportunity to use their positions and 'objective' scientific rationale as reason for the destruction of 'slum' communities, hidden behind the bureaucracy that lacked a central figure to blame or venerate.⁸² In Boyle Heights, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) focused its efforts on three projects: Aliso Village, Pico Gardens, and Estrada courts. All three sites were completed in 1942.⁸³ Planning officials, to justify their actions, would often invoke the idea of progress:

...after clearing fifteen hundred homes for the Harbor freeway south of Exposition Boulevard, the DOH (Division of Highways) paused to assert its conviction that the displaced citizens...had willingly sacrificed their homes for "progress:" "It would be assumed, in approaching the owners of this type, that one would meet with tears, hesitation, and reluctance and perhaps outright defiance when asked to move. This is not the case. The older folks seem to have resigned themselves to the fact that they should not stand in the way of progress and gladly cooperate. This is the rule rather than the exception."⁸⁴

Here, the Division of Highways takes the time to pause and rationalize the process it is taking in order to gain control of the land necessary for those massive infrastructural works. The idea of progress is a powerful one, but who exactly is benefitted by that progress?

Aliso Village, planned and built in the northwestern corner of Boyle Heights known as the Flats, was a New Deal-initiated project meant to be as "clean, efficient, and rational as the domestic life it was to shape."⁸⁵ By the '40s, the Flats had been cleared of the Cholo courts and homes that

⁸⁰ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 134.

⁸¹ Estrada, "If You Build It, They Will Move," 295.

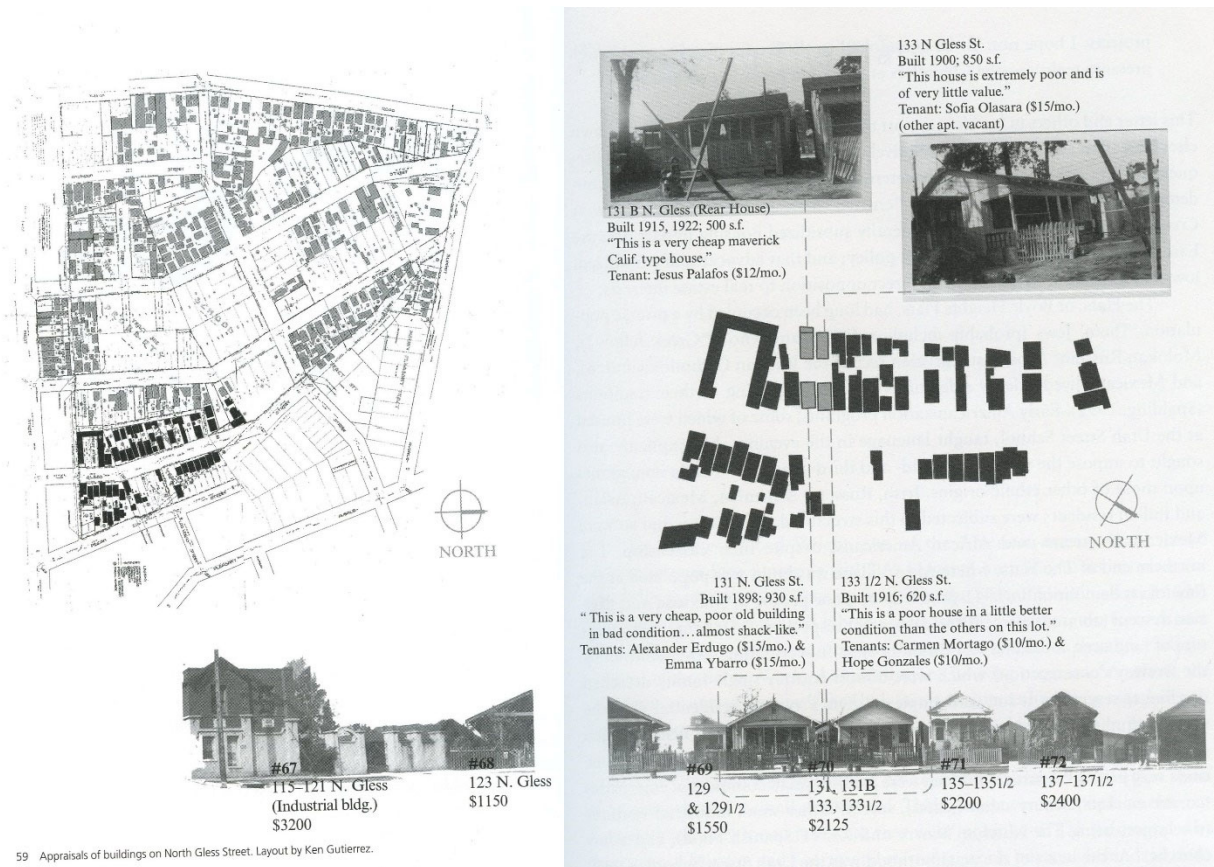
⁸² Avila, "The Sutured City", 199.

⁸³ "Los Angeles, CA: D53," *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America*. These projects are actually referenced in the HOLC description of Boyle Heights: "The Federal Government, in conjunction with the city government are undertaking a slum clearance project covering 41 areas in the extreme northeast part of the area."

⁸⁴ Avila, "The Sutured City", 199.

⁸⁵ Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City*, 123.

had occupied it at the turn of the century, ready for the large-scale planning of public housing of Aliso Village.



Figs. 48-49. Appraisals of buildings on N. Gless St. of The Flats area prior to Aliso Village, ca. 1940. Image courtesy of *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism*.



Fig. 50. Architect's rendering of Aliso Village as a modernist utopia. Image courtesy of *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism*.



Fig. 51. Images showing transformation of Aliso Village, 1941-1998. Image courtesy of The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism.



Fig. 52. Entrance to Aliso Village. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Public Library TESSA Digital Collection.

Los Angeles felt a change in public sentiment about public housing following World War II. Public housing began to be seen as a socialist endeavor, and as conservative real estate interests

and private real estate interests waged political attacks,⁸⁶ support would begin to decline. Aliso Village would characterize this decline in the decades to follow, “and the upheaval that brought [it] into existence will also characterize their demise, as the next generation’s utopia gains force.”⁸⁷ As seen in Aliso Flats, housing projects (nationwide) would fail to deliver long-term solutions for the working-class citizens it had promised to provide for (while taking their property):

Between 1949 and 1973, scores of Black and Latino communities were destroyed to make way for the postindustrial, suburban sensibilities that would characterize the modern U.S. city. Between the Housing Act of 1949 and 1967, 400,000 residential units were demolished in urban renewal areas across the nation, while only 10,760 low-rent public housing units replaced them.⁸⁸

Within this milieu of oppressive exterior forces in dwelling and transportation, the Boyle Heights community felt another pressure coming from racism in legislation. Not only demographically, but socially, the tragedy of Japanese internment in concentration camps would greatly affect the environment of Boyle Heights.. The entirety of the United States felt the shock of nationally broadcast news: on the morning of December 7th, 1941, Japanese assailants attacked the Pearl Harbor military base. The United States, which had remained (relatively) neutral was launched directly into the conflict of the Second World War. The attack on Pearl Harbor would immediately cause already-high racial tensions against Japanese and Japanese Americans to solidify, their presence seen as suddenly much more real and dangerous than ever.

As the United States entered the war, the entire Boyle Heights community would be impacted, not just the Japanese community. Mounting fears and war pressures urged local and national leaders (groups that already demonstrated considerable discriminatory actions against Japanese and other minority groups) into taking drastic measures to protect themselves. Action was both immediate and continued; for example, “within forty-eight hours of Pearl Harbor, FBI agents ad taken into custody nearly 1,300 individuals who were guilty by association—Buddhist priests, Japanese-language schoolteachers, employees of Japanese firms, and anyone else perceived to be too Japanese.”⁸⁹ On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing “the evacuation of all persons deemed a threat to national security from the West Coast to relocation camps.”⁹⁰ In between February and May 1942, Japanese and Japanese Americans were forced to rid themselves of their properties and belongings for ‘dirt

⁸⁶ Ibid, 164.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 124.

⁸⁸ Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 56.

⁸⁹ David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 95.

⁹⁰ “Document for February 19th: Executive Order 9066: Resulting in the Relocation of Japanese,” Archives.gov, accessed March 31, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/?dod-date=219#:~:text=Executive%20Order%209066%2C%20February%2019%2C%201942&text=Issued%20by%20President%20Franklin%20Roosevelt,to%20relocation%20centers%20further%20inland>.

cheap' in an environment that was described as chaotic.⁹¹ In the chaos of a new, frightening reality, stories of multiracial collaboration and compassion exist. In his book *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy*, George J. Sanchez reveals a number of anecdotes describing interactions between racial and ethnic groups that supported Japanese families.⁹²

Close neighbors of various ethnic groups were entrusted to take care of or manage property in the absence of their Japanese owners...Atoy Wilson Jr., then a recent African American graduate of [Theodore] Roosevelt High School, remembered his aunt taking care of a mom-and-pop store on Fresno Street for the Japanese American family who owned it. Though they never actually ran the store in their absence, they made sure that all of the family's possessions were returned when they were allowed to return.

Similarly, the Japanese American congregation at the newly built Tenrikyo Church on First Street entrusted the property and its constituents to the parishioners of the largely African American Baptist Church nearby, who returned it unscathed at the war's conclusion.

James Tolmasov, a Russian Molokan resident of the Flats...remembered his father being given a fancy, well-trained canary to care for. As Tolmasov recounts, "We saved it for them. Basically, we bought it, but 'When you want it back, let us know,' attitude, because they were friends. You don't just take advantage of a friend."

The fate of the belongings of the Shimo family offers another example...Bargain hunters offered [Mrs. Shimo] only ten dollars for all of her furniture and appliances, which left her so furious that she decided to leave everything at the house for the next tenant...her landlord and neighbor, the Reverend LeRoque, allowed her to store books and photo albums in his garage, all of which were returned to the Shimos in fine condition after the war.

With the removal of Japanese residents, Boyle Heights felt neighbors, friends, businesses disappear. The class of 1942 at Theodore Roosevelt High School would find roughly a third of its members experience relocation.⁹³

⁹¹ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 101.

⁹² Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 97-105

⁹³ *East L.A. Interchange*.



Fig. 53. Miné Okubo, Miné and Benji are shown to their barrack, Tanforan Assembly Center, San Bruno California, 1942. Image courtesy of the Japanese American National Museum and the Miné Okubo Collection.



Fig. 54. Hisako Hibi, White Heat, 1943. Image courtesy of the Japanese American National Museum and the Hisako Hibi Collection.

Two specific instances speak to the closeness that was felt by Boyle Heights residents (children especially), raised in and comfortable in a heterogeneously mixed environment. Mollie Murphy, an African American resident of Boyle Heights, “has donated more than 100 pieces of correspondence between her and her close friends, letters that in the case of correspondence with Chiyeiko Akahoshi—more than focusing on politics---focus on the personal toll of being separated from community and home.”⁹⁴

I guess you heard about the riot we had here, né? Well, anyway, another regiment of soldiers were sent in here, and guess what? Some of the soldiers were from Boyle Heights—Russian Flats. Golly, it shore is a small world, right? The soldiers saw some of the kids from Boyle Heights so they started to talk together—boy, it gave some of us a lift, not only mentally, but physically as well...I shore would like to see you, even for just a few seconds, no lyin’! Shucks!⁹⁵



Fig. 55. Mollie Wilson, left, and Mary Murakami, right, in front of Mary’s house, Folsom Street, ca. 1940. *Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Almanac.*

⁹⁴ Sojin Kim, “All Roads Lead to Boyle Heights: Exploring a Los Angeles Neighborhood,” in *Common Ground: The Japanese American National Museum and the Culture of Collaborations* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 158.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*



Fig. 56. Ralph Lazo, center, pictured in a yearbook photo among classmates at Manzanar High School, Manzanar War Relocation Camp, ca. 1944. Image courtesy of the Japanese American National Museum Digital Collection

While attending Belmont High School, Mexican-Irish 17-year-old Ralph Lazo learned of the impending departure of his Japanese friends and peers in response to the eviction orders that relocated Southern California's Japanese. He is believed to have been the only person of non-Japanese descent, without a Japanese American spouse, to voluntarily enter the camps during the war. He continued his education at Manzanar High School, and only left the camps upon his drafting to join the U.S. Army.⁹⁶ "When 140 million Americans turned their backs on us and excluded us into remote, desolate prison camps, the separation was absolute—almost. Ralph Lazo's presence among us said, 'No, not everyone,'" remembers William Hohri, a fellow internee at Manzanar.⁹⁷

Japanese internment in concentration camps, combined with the impact of Mexican repatriation in the '20s and the violence of the 1943 Zoot Suit Riots, would lead the Boyle Heights community to understand that "their community was not immune to racial practices...they were

⁹⁶ "Ralph Lazo: Friendship in the Face of Injustice," the Los Angeles Almanac, accessed March 11, 2022.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

all vulnerable to future displacement and removal.”⁹⁸ With this understanding between the different racial and ethnic communities, the seeds for future collaboration would be sown with the efforts of the Community Service Organization (CSO) in the late 1940s. One of the CSO’s greatest accomplishments would be to elect Mexican American social worker Edward Roybal to a position on the Los Angeles City Council.



Fig. 57. (left) William “Bill” Phillips of the Phillips Music Company, ca. 1940. *Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Almanac.*

Fig. 58. (right) Phillips Music Company storefront, ca. 1940. *Image courtesy of the Los Angeles Almanac.*

Bill Phillip’s Phillips Music Company Store is an example of multicultural collaboration in Boyle Heights. On Brooklyn Avenue, Jewish immigrant Bill Phillips would offer promising Latino musicians a place to play in the back of his store, often connecting them to his contacts in Hollywood or Central Avenue. Phillips would encourage acts like The Midnighters, Los Lobos, and Ollin to represent an East Los Angeles Sound.⁹⁹ Following the period of Japanese internment, Phillips would allow a recently returned kid who was interested in sporting goods to operate a small sporting goods sale; the kid went on to become the biggest sporting goods business person in the Japanese American community.¹⁰⁰ One of his most significant contributions would be as co-chair of the newly formed Boyle Heights Support Committee.¹⁰¹ With the combined efforts of the Jewish, Mexican, African and other minority support, the

⁹⁸ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 95.

⁹⁹ “Roybal: A Multi-Racial Catalyst for Democracy,” the Boyle Heights Museum, accessed March 11, 2022, <https://www.boyleheightsmuseum.org/roybal-a-multi-racial-catalyst>.

¹⁰⁰ George J. Sánchez, William R. Ferris, Deborah Dash Moore, John Shelton Reed, and Theodore Rosengarten, “Regionalism: The Significance of Place in American Jewish Life,” *American Jewish History* 93, no. 2 (2007), 126, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23887374>.

¹⁰¹ “Roybal: A Multi-Racial Catalyst for Democracy.”

“unprecedented voter registration effort on the Eastside enrolled 17,000 new voters of all backgrounds” ahead of the 1949 election that led to Roybal’s inclusion on the Los Angeles City Council,¹⁰² making him the first Mexican American to join the Council since 1881.¹⁰³ Phillips also chaired Roybal’s Citizens Committee to Re-Elect Roybal for Roybal’s 1951 reelection campaign (which he won easily with 70 percent of the total vote).¹⁰⁴ In his actions as a business owner and community leader, Phillips assured the creation of a legacy of multiculturalism in Boyle Heights, a man whose store was “more than a music store or a record shop; it was a space for democracy where diverse urban communities gathered to explore cultural traditions and invent contemporary musical languages.”¹⁰⁵ In a period where covenants for white ethnic groups were lessening and increased opportunities at ‘higher-class’ suburbs were presenting themselves,¹⁰⁶ Phillip’s store remained one of the last icons of Jewish business in Boyle Heights until its doors closed in 1992.¹⁰⁷



Fig. 59. Edward Roybal is sworn into the Los Angeles City Council, becoming the first Mexican American to gain a seat on that council since 1881. Image courtesy of the UCLA Digital Collection.

With the mounting pressures of physical expansion in response to population increases, Boyle Heights would continue to come face-to-face with issues of marginalization in the ‘50s and ‘60s. The decades to come would represent some of the area’s most iconic protests as its multiracial groups gathered around common causes to defend their community.

¹⁰² Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 164.

¹⁰³ Romo, *East Los Angeles*, 169.

¹⁰⁴ Sánchez, *Boyle Heights*, 168.

¹⁰⁵ Bruce Phillips, “Brooklyn Avenue Melting Pot,” Los Angeles Conservancy, last modified October 21, 2014, <https://www.laconservancy.org/stories/brooklyn-avenue-melting-pot>.

¹⁰⁶ “Jewish American Heritage,” Los Angeles Conservancy, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://www.laconservancy.org/jewish-american-heritage>.

¹⁰⁷ Phillips, “Brooklyn Avenue Melting Pot.”

Epilogue: Boyle Heights, 1960s

The postwar Los Angeles of the 1960s would see the patterns of external forces imposing themselves on Boyle Heights continue. The relationship between transportation infrastructure and dwelling is immediately tied together in the freeway construction of the '50s and '60s. Over the course of more than two decades, the planning and construction process of five freeway systems—the Santa Ana, San Bernadino, Long Beach, Golden State, and Pomona—was imposed on Boyle Heights, sold as a feat of massive engineering that would ease traffic congestion, but fully intended to divide and disrupt Boyle Heights communities in the name of progress and urban renewal.

[The] East L.A. Interchange, which uses 32 bridges, 20 walls, excavated 1.5 million cubic yards of earth, laid 23,545 feet of concrete pipe, used 4.2 million yards of structural steel, and laid 13.2 million pounds of reinforced steel to complete the largest single contract ever awarded by the Division of Highways. Its completion in 1961 marked the crystallization of the disregard legislative bodies of local government had for Boyle Heights and its residents.¹⁰⁸

The Santa Ana 5 Freeway (1944), the Hollywood 101 Freeway (1948), the San Bernadino 10 Freeway (1953,1972), the Golden State Freeway (1955), the Santa Monica Freeway (1961), the Long Beach Freeway (1961), and the Pomona 60 Freeway (1965) would come to account for 19 percent of East Los Angeles' land use.¹⁰⁹ The best-case scenario for residents in the area would be divisions from their stores, churches, neighbors, and places of gathering.¹¹⁰ The worst-case scenarios would be relocation. The construction of the Golden State Freeway, for example, would divide Hollenbeck Park (one of Boyle Heights' most significant public spaces), destroy 1,400 homes, and displace 5,000 Boyle Heights residents.¹¹¹

Not only a physical division of Boyle Heights, the not-wholly-public, not-wholly-private space of the freeway would serve as a liminal space of transition that “channels its ‘audience’ along a concrete continuum that imposed a singular perception of the city and limited the possibilities for different perspectives.”¹¹² The freeway as liminal space had, “been organized to further the tendency towards social indifference...designed to skim over and skirt around eyesores such as Watts and East Boyle Heights.”

¹⁰⁸ Estrada, “If You Build It, They Will Move,” 300.

¹⁰⁹ Estrada, “If You Build It, They Will Move,” 290.

¹¹⁰ Johnson, “Spatial Entitlement,” 56.

¹¹¹ Sanchez, *Boyle Heights*, 180.

¹¹² Avila, “The Sutured City,” 186.



Fig. 60. Roger Kuntz's *Concrete Canyon* from his "Freeway series," ca. 1962, demonstrates the empty curves of the freeway, a liminal space that takes up the entire frame to block out any view outwards. Image courtesy of the Orange County Register.

Within this prescribed indifference of the general public, Boyle Heights residents were robbed of opportunities for multigenerational wealth, as the freeways "demolished not only the assets that assure collective success but also the spaces of congregation that inspire it."¹¹³ Hailed as the greatest engineering feat since the Romans, Even when the city center wasn't being ignored, it was cast as a place of social evil: "film noir damned the corrupted city while television affirmed the suburbs as sites of purity, safety, and opportunity, encouraging the middle class to reject the former and embrace the latter,"¹¹⁴ thus encouraging existing trends to suburban landscapes for a mostly white middle class. At the same time, legislation like the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 and the general public attitude would continue to advocate urban freeway construction as a means of slum clearance and urban renewal, something that The Flats area of Boyle Heights had already experienced.

Within these attacks on its physical fabric and a continuing social exclusion, the marginalized groups of Boyle Heights grew together to protest and fight back against the injustices done to them. In the fight against freeway construction, Boyle Heights residents would prove unsuccessful: for example, the 1953 Boyle-Hollenbeck Anti-Golden State Freeway Committee, chaired by Los Angeles City Council member Edward Roybal, would sponsor protest rallies and

¹¹³ Johnson, "Spatial Entitlement," 320.

¹¹⁴ Michan Andrew Connor, "Holding the Center: Images of Urbanity on Television in Los Angeles, 1950-1970," *Southern California Quarterly*, vol. 94, no. 2 (Summer 2012), 233.

even amass 15,000 signatures opposing the Golden State Freeway.¹¹⁵ Upliftingly, the battle against the eminent domain and subsidized land improvement strategies of urban renewal (like that experienced at Bunker Hill in the '60s) would go in Boyle Heights' favor as protests by the Property Owners Committee for the Preservation of Boyle Heights and others led to the dissolution of renewal plans by 1958.¹¹⁶ The continued career of Edward Roybal in Los Angeles politics (and eventually U.S. politics) would mean that the marginalized communities¹¹⁷ of Boyle Heights would at least have a defender and leader to oppose harmful regional and national forces.

The most significant event of the '60s in examining Boyle Heights through a social lens is the gaining of a voice. Through the presence of civil rights advocates, the protests of the East L.A. student blowouts, a rising Chicano movement, and loudly voiced protest against freeway construction and urban renewal, the residents of Boyle Heights were able to prove that its multiracial and multicultural composition was one of its strengths, in opposition of external perspectives.

¹¹⁵ Ernesto Chavez, "'A Moveable Object Meeting an Irresistible Force:' Los Angeles' Ethnic Mexican Community in the 1950s and Early 1960s," *Mi Raza Primero! (My People First!): Nationalism, Identity and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 25-26.

¹¹⁶ Chavez, "A Moveable Object Meeting an Irresistible Force," 28.

¹¹⁷ Sanchez, *Boyle Heights*, 181. As Jews, other white ethnic groups, and Mexican Americans left Boyle Heights for their particular reasons, Roybal's constituency would be increasingly Mexican and Black during his tenure as a Los Angeles politician.

Conclusion

I was once fortunate enough to spend a semester abroad in Rome. It was one of the most influential times in my life—the chance to appreciate the city through the eyes of an architecture student, to meet new people, to experience another culture and the frustrations that come when cultures collide. One particular event stands out to me: in a little hole-in-the-wall dive bar (an Irish pub operated by a Sicilian on a Roman's behalf), I met a pair of Peruvian twenty-something-year-olds. They conversed as they filled their lungs with smoke, and I filled mine with the cool night air. Initially approaching me in Italian, they soon realized I spoke Spanish, and we quickly transitioned into that language. As our conversation progressed, I learned that they were the sons of Peruvian immigrants, and that both of them were born in Rome. They confessed that their Spanish, like mine, was out of practice, their vocabulary not as sharp as it could be. The biggest take-away from that conversation was this:

They considered themselves not Italian, but Peruvian. Roman Peruvians, or Peruvian Romans? Stated so plainly and so seemingly self-contradicting, the conversation left me baffled.

Our existence is at once a factual state of being and the perception of it. The fact that every single human experiences the impact of 'true' and 'perceived' reality is an infinitely fascinating subject. In relation to the built environment, how that applies to the longer timeline of a building, of a block, a neighborhood, a city, a region—these perceptions, how they form, who is creating them—these are the questions that grip me.

What is the relationship between place and neighborhood identity, and how do demographic and physical urban changes reflect and influence that evolving identity? This investigation of this question, applied to the locality of Boyle Heights, allowed me to learn about a place I've never been to and had only the slightest of connections to. Boyle Heights' evolution examined through dwelling, transportation infrastructure, and sociocultural landscape, has allowed me to explore the history of this place and understand the factors that have led to its development even to the present day.

This investigation reveals a history of top-down decisions affecting Boyle Heights and its emergence as an island of marginalization beginning in the early 20th century. The use of transportation infrastructure, exemplified by the loss of the public space of the streetcar line in favor of the private space of the automobile and freeway construction, allowed the powers-that-be to continually assault and divide Boyle Heights in the golden age of freeway construction. Dwelling follows patterns of dispersal typical of the Los Angeles and Southern California region, and Boyle Heights' economic status and racially open status meant to poorer housing for marginalized groups that would come to be disparaged as multiuse and poor, making it subject to the totalitarian housing schemes of the 1940s. Aliso Village would exemplify the failure of housing schemes in Los Angeles, its lack of continual support leading to its degradation and failure to deliver what it promised.

Boyle Heights' lack of racial restriction, an effect of marginalization, lead to the creation of a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural community who saw an evolution from victim of top-down practices, to protestor against them. Having experienced the effects of discrimination (exemplified by Mexican repatriation in the '20s and Japanese internment in the '40s). The same restrictive policies that brought together these communities would be combatted by a community proud of its identity, vocal and resistant to discriminatory policies and policies that would be harmful to their community.

As Boyle Heights enters a new era of a return to the city center, how will it continue to change? Will it be able to resist change? A survey of Boyle Heights' history serves to give a special appreciation to its contemporary conditions: the construction of a \$588 million "Ribbon of Light" bridge to replace the Sixth Street Viaduct¹¹⁸ heralds a new connection to downtown and an unknown future. The Boyle Heights of today is always subject to change, proving its continued status as part of Los Angeles' impermanence and change.

¹¹⁸ "About the Project: The Sixth Street Viaduct Replacement Project," Sixth Street Viaduct Replacement Project Bureau of Engineering, accessed March 28, 2022, https://www.sixthstreetviaduct.org/about_the_project.

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