

**An Equity Agenda for Transit-Oriented Development  
Planning for Sustainable Growth in Los Angeles' Inner City**

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## Executive Summary

Transit-oriented development aims to create sustainable, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly urban neighborhoods that integrate transit, housing, schools, parks and other social and economic amenities into and for the benefit of the surrounding community. TOD combats urban sprawl by employing progressive planning techniques, such as smart growth and green building, and by providing access to alternative transportation choices to the automobile. TOD, however, tends to occur in affluent, white, suburban neighborhoods around newly installed commuter rail lines rather than in low-income, nonwhite, inner city neighborhoods with already existing transit infrastructures.

A majority of the current TOD literature and practices focus on sites located in suburban communities and overlook the potential opportunities for TOD in low-income urban neighborhoods. Although the expansive amount of TOD research provides a comprehensive overview of the current status of TOD movement in this country, community interests as well as social and economic injustices associated with class/race dynamics are largely absent from the literature. However, this study argues that TOD has the potential to remedy urban America's long history of transit inequity that disproportionately burdens low-income inner city residents.

Due to federal transportation policies and funds that favor highway development over public transit, many social and economic inequities in the inner city arise. Construction of highways encourages housing development farther from city centers and, concurrently, draws low-skill jobs away from the urban core. Investment in highway development and auto-oriented transportation policies encourage suburban sprawl and produce negative social and economic effects, such as residential segregation and the lack of access to entry-level employment for

minorities.<sup>1</sup> Transportation policies, therefore, isolate low-income, nonwhite inner city neighborhoods in urban centers with substandard transit systems and a lack of access to housing and other services. By redirecting public investment toward inner city transit as well as spurring economic development in urban communities, TOD can be a tool for both sustainable development as well as a means to address decades of transit injustice in urban America.

Specifically, in Los Angeles, inner city communities have suffered from America's mid-20<sup>th</sup> century disinvestment in public transit. Furthermore, with urban America's recently "renewed interest in rail travel and rail investment"<sup>2</sup> throughout the past decade, Metro, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, has shifted even more funding from bus to rail in the hope of attracting middle-class, suburban residents out of their cars. Although Metro's rail system serves 6,675,759 monthly riders, Metro's bus system serves an astonishing 30,093,689 riders per month. Since a majority of these bus riders are low-income and nonwhite, the shift of funding from bus to rail unfairly burdens these poor inner city residents and presumably favors Los Angeles' middle- and upper-class residents choosing to use rail. This study argues that TOD has the potential to address transit inequity by redirecting investment and development toward bus services in the inner city.

Planning for TOD in Los Angeles' inner city communities, however, faces many challenges. Due to the sheer size of Los Angeles, a single comprehensive plan cannot provide realistic guidelines and implementation tools for the future growth of the region. The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan, therefore, divides the city into 35 Community Plan Areas. Los Angeles' New Community Plan Program relies heavily upon community participation in

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Sanchez, Rich Stolz, and Jacinta S. Ma, "Moving to Equity: Addressing Inequitable Effects of Transportation Policies in Minorities," *The Civil Rights Project* at Harvard University, 2003, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Hank Dittmar, Dena Belzer and Gerald Autler, "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," in *The New Transit Town*, eds. Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004), 3.

order create innovative policy at the local level. The community plans, therefore, act as an effective vehicle for implementation of a TOD equity agenda that addresses transit inequity, inadequate housing and economic development in Los Angeles' inner city neighborhoods, specifically in Westlake, a low-income inner city neighborhood directly west of downtown Los Angeles.

Westlake is one of Los Angeles' most vibrant yet severely underserved inner city neighborhoods. Westlake has many community assets, such as substantial commercial development, pedestrian-oriented activity, a large, public recreational space, MacArthur Park, and an extensive transit infrastructure. However, Westlake suffers from severe public and private disinvestment, resulting in unsanitary streets, inadequate transit facilities, and a severe shortage of affordable housing. Residents are furious about the unsafe conditions for pedestrians, the substandard and ineffective sanitation services, the rapidly decreasing affordable housing options, and the lack of transit equity. The lack of funding for bus services has resulted in cutting bus lines and increasing fares, which further results in overcrowding, unsafe and unsanitary transit stops, and an appalling lack of bus benches and shelters.

Los Angeles' New Community Plan Program provides an opportunity for the City to reinvest in Westlake and raise the substandard living conditions in which many local residents currently endure. However, many residents fear the onset of gentrification and residential displacement that often accompany investment in and development of urban neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, gentrification is one of the main concerns with the implementation of TOD in the inner city.

This study, therefore, proposes a TOD equity agenda, which not only lends itself to the building of sustainable communities, but addresses deeply-rooted transit equity and access issues

prevalent in the inner city. Specifically, this study outlines five essential components that compose a preliminary TOD equity agenda:

- Safety, Shelter and Sanitation at Transit Stops and Stations
- Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Measures
- Pedestrian-friendly Design and Zoning
- Investment in Local Businesses and Mixed-Use Projects
- Reduction of Parking Requirements and Maintenance of Green Space & Public Parks

## Chapter 1: Introduction – Transit-Oriented Development in Urban America

Imagine an energetic streetscape alive with pedestrians and cyclists passing by shops, restaurants, grocery stores, schools, apartments and houses all within proximity to a wide range of transit options. Although this vision rarely typifies urban neighborhoods in the United States, American planners and community members are starting to discuss the importance of developing strategies for smart and sustainable growth. In order to combat the adverse effects of post-war suburbanization and urban sprawl on the sustainability of contemporary American cities, planners, developers and communities need to start thinking of the American city as an organic whole rather than a set of fragmented suburbs, urban neighborhoods and city centers. As Peter Calthorpe outlines in his 1993 book, *The Next American Metropolis*, the American city is an ecosystem in which the urban core, its suburbs and their natural environments are mutually interdependent and thus intimately related.<sup>3</sup> Transit, as a common vein running through urban and suburban neighborhoods, holds the potential of reconnecting urban America.

Public transit, which includes bus systems and interurban rail, is a vital component within the evolving strategies for sustainable growth and development in American cities. Urban America's "renewed interest in rail travel and rail investment"<sup>4</sup> throughout the past decade indicates an overall recognition of the importance of transit in city planning. More specifically, starting in the 1980s, progressive planners and environmentalists began advocating for transit-oriented development (TOD) as a means to counter conventional post-war automobile-oriented development and to provide alternative transportation choices to the car. Advocates claim that

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Hank Dittmar, Dena Belzer and Gerald Autler, "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," in *The New Transit Town*, eds. Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004), 3.

TOD can repair the schism between housing, jobs and transit, which the automobile established in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Since America's oldest cities like Chicago, New York, Boston and even Los Angeles "grew up around transit systems"<sup>5</sup> in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, developing around transit is not a new idea. TOD, however, encompasses more than simply development in proximity to transit: TOD aims to create sustainable, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly urban neighborhoods that integrate transit, housing, schools, parks and other social and economic amenities into and for the benefit of the surrounding community. TOD combats urban sprawl by employing progressive planning techniques, such as smart growth and green building, and by providing access to alternative transportation choices to the automobile.

TOD, however, tends to occur in predominantly affluent, white, suburban neighborhoods around newly installed commuter rail lines rather than in low-income, nonwhite, inner city<sup>6</sup> neighborhoods with already existing transit infrastructures. Although TOD has the potential to strengthen and benefit low-income, urban communities, many challenges face TOD in the inner city, such as the unwillingness of private developers to invest in the inner city due to "perceived risk"<sup>7</sup> and a lack of public initiative to embark upon development projects in struggling urban neighborhoods. America's inner city, however, provide many advantages to private investors and public funding that do not exist in suburban communities outside of the urban core. As Los Angeles-based TOD expert Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris describes, inner city commercial strips often have an abundance of available commercial space, lower commercial rents and land values,

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Dunphy, et al. *Developing Around Transit: Strategies and Solutions that Work* (Washington D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 2004), 3.

<sup>6</sup> This study uses a similar definition of "inner city" as Loukaitou-Sideris' 2000 Delphi survey, in which "inner city" refers to underserved and economically disadvantaged urban areas located between a city's downtown and its suburbs.

<sup>7</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," *Journal of Public Transportation*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2000): 90.



and higher density that translates into a consumer market with sizeable purchasing power.<sup>8</sup>

America's inner city, therefore, offers a very conducive setting for TOD.

The greatest challenge facing TOD in the inner city, however, is strengthening the economic development and transit infrastructure in urban neighborhood without gentrifying them. Although TOD seeks to establish sustainable neighborhoods that raise the quality of life for the surrounding community, often the demographics of the surrounding community shift from low-income to middle- and high-income as TOD projects usher in economic development and more attractive residential options. Ultimately, America's TOD movement has yet to define its social and economic equity agenda, which should not only orient Americans away from their cars, but also make transit more accessible to low-income, transit-dependent communities. By establishing an equity agenda, TOD has the potential to enhance mobility and access to jobs and education opportunities that otherwise do not exist in the inner city.

With its extensive highway infrastructure and development of excessively auto-oriented transportation policies in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Los Angeles' transit-dependent, inner city residents have endured years of transit inequity and disinvestment in housing and economic development. Los Angeles' urban communities, such as Westlake, a dense inner city neighborhood located directly west of Downtown Los Angeles, face inadequate bus services and insufficient transit facilities, specifically unsafe and unsanitary transit stops. According to the Central City Neighborhood Partners, a local network of community organizations in Los Angeles' central city, Westlake residents and community groups view increased public investment in transit as a step toward creating "healthy, vibrant communities – neighborhoods with safe streets, clean sidewalks, quality bus stops, good bus service, more trees, and open

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<sup>8</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 92.

space.”<sup>9</sup> TOD has the potential to address these community concerns and create livable, walkable communities with safe and sanitary access to transit options.

By reviewing the current literature on TOD in urban America and exploring transit equity issues in low-income, nonwhite communities, this study aims to establish an equity agenda for TOD in the inner city. More specifically, by using Westlake as a case study, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the primary objectives of and barriers facing TOD in urban America?
- What are the current debates surrounding TOD and who are the primary players?
- How transit-oriented is Los Angeles? What constitutes a social and economic equity agenda for TOD in Los Angeles’ inner city neighborhoods, particularly in Westlake?
- How can the City of Los Angeles use TOD to empower its low-income communities and curb the risk of gentrification?
- By assessing the current conditions Los Angeles’ inner city neighborhoods, particularly in Westlake, such as access to transit, affordable housing, overcrowding, public/green space, access to education, and job availability, how can the Los Angeles Department of City Planning establish and execute an equity agenda in its low-income, transit-dependent community plan areas?

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<sup>9</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 1.

## Chapter 2: The Background of Today's TOD Movement

In Dittmar and Ohland's 2004 study of TOD theory and its practical applications in *The New Transit Town*, the authors assert that urban America is ripe for transit-oriented development. Recent political and economic trends, such as the resurgence of investment in America's downtowns in the 1990s, the maturation of American suburbs into independent municipalities with increasing density, and restored local, state and federal interest in urban rail systems, have created an environment in which the public and private sectors can facilitate TOD.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the authors claim that the demographic changes in urban America, specifically the concentration of immigrants in cities, the flight of "empty nesters" from suburbs back to the urban core, and the increase in nonfamily households since 2000, also contribute to a favorable climate for successful implementation of TOD.<sup>11</sup>

While many academics, community organizations and government agencies view TOD as a means to usher sustainable and smart methods of growth into American city planning processes, much of the literature focuses on TOD in suburban communities and omits any discussion of TOD in urban and inner city communities. As Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Tridib Banerjee suggest in their 2000 study of the lack of development along Los Angeles' Blue Line, many factors hinder TOD in the inner city. Specifically, an unwillingness of the private sector to invest in inner city neighborhoods, redlining (the practice of denying loans or increasing costs to residents of racially segregated neighborhoods), and a lack of public funding contributes to the lack of TOD in urban America. Despite barriers facing TOD in the inner city,

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<sup>10</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," 11.

however, many experts are starting to agree that TOD has the potential to increase the mobility of inner city residents by providing access to transit and thus access to jobs and services.<sup>12</sup>

In Hess and Lombardi's 2004 literature review of barriers to TOD in the inner city, they claim that the lack of literature and research surrounding TOD in the inner city offers some possible insight into "why the TOD trend is strongest in high-growth metropolitan areas like San Diego and why it seems to skip struggling neighborhoods within them, like South Los Angeles."<sup>13</sup> As the following literature review demonstrates, discussions of TOD as a tool to bring about social equity in addition to sustainable development and growth in America's inner city are largely absent from current TOD literature.

## 2.1 Defining Transit-Oriented Development

Among experts, the TOD "vision" remains relatively consistent: to create communities in which residents walk, cycle and use public transit to get from their homes to work, school, grocery stores, restaurants, shops, parks and other local businesses and amenities. As Loukaitou-Sideris describes, "This vision is about an alternative way of life supported by a higher density, pedestrian-friendly, and transit-contingent urban environment."<sup>14</sup>

TOD as a means to fulfill this vision, however, lacks a consistent definition. Subsequently, TOD advocates have yet to outline a single, comprehensive list of goals or a coherent set of standards, which would assist communities, government agencies and developers in the execution of successful TOD projects. Since there is "no clear definition of TOD or agreement on desired outcomes," there is no way to ensure that a TOD project will deliver these

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<sup>12</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 90.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Baldwin Hess and Peter A. Lombardi, "Policy Support for and Barriers to Transit Oriented Development in the Inner City: Literature Review." *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, no. 1887 (2004): 26.

<sup>14</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 76.

outcomes.<sup>15</sup> Without standards, *The New Transit Town* argues that successful TOD is “the result of clever exceptionalism, and beyond the reach of most communities or developers.”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, in Loukaitou-Sideris’s 2000 Delphi survey<sup>17</sup> in which she sets out to identify the goals of and barriers facing TOD in the inner city, the first round of questions resulted in an extremely wide range of responses from a panel of TOD experts. The initial variety of responses regarding the goals of TOD demonstrates that the concept of TOD is “loaded with a variety of expectations” that include:<sup>18</sup>

- Economic goals (generate revenue for the transit authority, the developer, the community)
- Environmental goals (air quality, sustainability, reduction of sprawl, energy conservation)
- Social goals (transit/housing choices, mobility, accessibility, social interaction)
- Planning/transportation goals (land-use/transportation coordination, regional linkages)

The multitude and diversity of issues raised in the Delphi survey reveals much ambiguity regarding the primary goals and desired results of TOD among experts.

As a way to create some consistency throughout TOD literature, many TOD authors often refer to Calthorpe’s original definition of TOD in his 1993 *The Next American Metropolis* as a prototype of the definition of TOD. Calthorpe defines TODs as mixed-use communities within a quarter-mile radius of a transit stop or core commercial area. TODs mix residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses are in walkable proximity of one another, making it convenient for

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<sup>15</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., “An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development,” 10.

<sup>16</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., “An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development,” 10.

<sup>17</sup> The Delphi technique is a means of systematic group judgment in which a group of informed individuals participate in an iterative process in the form 2 to 4 rounds of questions in order to deal with a complex problem and yield comprehensive solutions. Loukaitou-Sideris emphasizes that the Delphi technique is especially applicable to problems or issues that have a lack of consensus or agreement, such as the goals and desired outcomes of TOD.

<sup>18</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, “Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey,” 82.

resident and workers to travel by transit, bicycle or foot.<sup>19</sup> TOD design configurations and land uses “emphasize a pedestrian-oriented environment and reinforce the use of public transportation.”<sup>20</sup>

Although Calthorpe outlines the fundamental ideas underlying TOD, his definition describes the TOD vision rather than prescribing specific methods and techniques regarding the execution this type of development. The lack of comprehensive guidelines and goals is clearly one of the TOD movement’s greatest weaknesses.

## **2.2 Benefits of, Challenges Facing and Primary Players in Today’s TOD Movement**

In May 2002, the California Department of Transportation released a comprehensive study of TOD that outlines its overall potential benefits. According to this study, TOD:<sup>21</sup>

- Provides a variety of mobility options
- Increases transit ridership and thus reduces rates of vehicle miles traveled
- Reduces air pollution and energy consumption rates
- Conserves resource land and open space by encouraging dense growth
- Increases households’ disposable incomes by lowering transportation expenditures
- Contributes to more affordable housing
- Increases public safety by creating active and busy streets; and
- Plays a role in economic development.

Furthermore, the Washington D.C.-based Transit Cooperative Research Program published a comprehensive overview of TOD in 2004 with leading TOD researcher Robert Cervero as its

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, “Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey,” 82.

<sup>21</sup> Terry Parker and BG Arrington, “Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California,” A California Department of Transportation Report, 2002, 4-6.

principle author. The report argues that TOD is a necessary tool to curb sprawl, reduce traffic congestion, increase profits for land and business owners near transit stations, and “[revitalize] declining neighborhoods.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to TOD’s potential environmental and economic benefits, *The New Transit Town* highlights “place making” (i.e. creating attractive, pedestrian-friendly places) as an important goal and benefit of TOD in American communities. The authors argue that aesthetic, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly station areas with comprehensive design plans not only raise the quality of life for the neighborhood residents, but also play a large role in the eligibility of TOD projects for public funding.<sup>23</sup>

For example, station areas in Pasadena along the Gold Line, a 13.7-mile light rail line connecting Pasadena and South Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles,<sup>24</sup> have been able to take advantage of Pasadena’s strong market and development potential and built TOD projects directly into Pasadena’s planning processes.<sup>25</sup> The City of Pasadena views the Gold Line station areas as assets to the community because they provide business and residential amenities to its residents in addition to creating attractive, pedestrian-friendly places. This is especially true at the Del Mar station; as a result of the City’s comprehensive design plan for the station area, the Del Mar station is “the site of the largest and most prominent TOD developments along the Gold Line corridor.”<sup>26</sup> The Del Mar station area benefits the City’s residents by providing housing options in proximity to job opportunities and transit, as well as creating an aesthetically pleasing, mixed-use station area that continues to attract public funds.

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<sup>22</sup> Transit Cooperative Research Program, *TCRP Report 102: Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experience, Challenges, and Prospects* (Washington D.C.: TCRP, 2004), 134.

<sup>23</sup> Hank Dittmar and Shelley Poticha, “Defining Transit-Oriented Development: The New Building Block,” in *The New Transit Town*, eds. Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004), 30-31.

<sup>24</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Douglas Houston, and Ava Bromberg, “Gold Line Corridor Study Final Report,” a Southern California Association of Governments Report, 2007, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, et al., “Gold Line Corridor Study Final Report,” 6.

<sup>26</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, et al., “Gold Line Corridor Study Final Report,” 6.

In Peter Calthorpe's foreword to *The New Transit Town*, however, he describes many of the challenges currently facing TOD in America, including the risk of gentrification.

Specifically, with the onset of "the hoped-for middle-class migration back to the city," residents of urban neighborhoods, primarily low-income, nonwhite communities, are often displaced and forced to move out of their neighborhoods. As a result, Calthorpe also describes balancing the needs of middle- and lower- class populations as a primary challenge facing TOD today. Lastly, he claims that the lack of inter-city collaboration due to the competition between cities to attract commercial and economic development hinders TOD in American cities.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, the 2002 California Department of Transportation study also outlines many factors impeding the implementation of TOD:<sup>28</sup>

- Design of transit system and station, including poor pedestrian access and expansive surface-level parking lots that separate the station from the community
- Municipal zoning, which is often unfriendly to transit development
- Higher risks and costs for developers and investors, due to the unconventional nature of TOD in comparison to America's traditional auto-oriented development; and
- Local community concerns, which oppose development in their neighborhoods.

The 2004 TCRP Report presents additional barriers to TOD in American cities, such as the location of TODs along "low-cost corridors that have minimal development potential," the limited local experience or expertise in planning for TOD, and historical stigma surrounding dense urban infill among developers and lenders.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Calthorpe, Foreword to *The New Transit Town*, eds. Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2004), xii.

<sup>28</sup> Terry Parker and BG Arrington, "Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California," 9.

<sup>29</sup> Transit Cooperative Research Program, *TCRP Report 102: Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experience, Challenges, and Prospects*, 114-115.



TOD literature asserts that the current challenges and barriers facing TOD reflect the fragmentation of its primary players, which consist of: transit agencies, local governments, developers and lenders, and the community.<sup>30</sup> Each player has its own agenda, so it is essential that all participants work together to produce a cohesive, unified project. For instance, the Lindbergh Station in Atlanta, Georgia, described in more detail below, exemplifies a project hindered by conflicting interests. Specifically, community interests conflicted with public and corporate interests when government agencies agreed to contract a large corporate tenant as part of the TOD project and threatened to dismantle the unique character of the community. *The New Transit Town* explains that TOD must function as a whole in which “all its components – trains, buses, taxis, cars, bicycles, pedestrians, housing, offices, and stores – must interact with one another.”<sup>31</sup> Likewise, TOD’s players must interact and cooperate in order to translate their individual and collective goals into reality.<sup>32</sup>

Although experts clearly define the vision of TOD and projects that result in diverse, sustainable, transit-oriented neighborhoods, the conflicting interests among TOD’s primary players, whether it be stimulating economic development, increasing access to transit and/or creating pedestrian-friendly environments, generates ambiguity among TOD’s main goals. As discussed above, the lack of definitive objectives clearly hinders the implementation of TOD in American cities. Ultimately, TOD literature stresses that the fragmentation of its primary players and stakeholders is the fundamental undercurrent driving the challenges and barriers confronting TOD today.

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<sup>30</sup> Dena Belzer, Gerald Autler, Judith Espinosa, Sharon Feigon, and Gloria Ohland, “The Transit-Oriented Development Drama and Its Actors,” *The New Transit Town*, eds. Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2004), 46.

<sup>31</sup> Dena Belzer, et al., “The Transit-Oriented Development Drama and Its Actors,” 46.

<sup>32</sup> Dena Belzer, et al., “The Transit-Oriented Development Drama and Its Actors,” 46.

### 2.3 TOD in the Inner City

As Hess and Lombardi assert, Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris is one of the few TOD experts currently discussing opportunities for TOD in America's inner city neighborhoods as opposed to single-family, suburban communities.<sup>33</sup> After conducting 3 rounds of questions in which a panel of 25 experts and advocates discussed TOD in the inner city in her 2000 Delphi survey, Loukaitou-Sideris deduces that the five major barriers to TOD in the inner city include:<sup>34</sup>

- Disinterest and unwillingness of the private sector to locate and invest in the inner city because of perceived risk and stigma surrounding urban neighborhoods;
- Absence of market demand for property in the inner city due to the higher cost of mixed-use development;
- Competitive disadvantage of the inner cities to attract development dollars;
- Preconceived prejudices deterring developers from embarking on projects in the inner city; and
- Lack of financing for inner city projects and redlining in low-income, nonwhite communities.

Additionally, many community organizations in inner city neighborhoods assert that a lack of economic incentives, particularly low interest loans to developers and business subsidies, as well as a lack of available space for parking deters private and public entities from pursuing TOD projects in the inner city.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Daniel Baldwin Hess and Peter A. Lombardi, "Policy Support for and Barriers to Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: Literature Review," 29.

<sup>34</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 90.

<sup>35</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Tridib Banerjee, "The Blue Line Blues: Why the Vision of Transit Village May Not Materialize Despite Impressive Growth in Transit Ridership," *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (2000): 117.

Although the Delphi survey concluded that TOD should be a means to “combat inner city decline and bring about positive change,”<sup>36</sup> studies have shown that the mere presence of a transit line does not necessarily facilitate economic development, housing options and job opportunities into depressed, inner city neighborhoods. Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee’s 2000 study of the Blue Line, which connects Los Angeles and Long Beach and passes through some of the most neglected, low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, concludes that establishment the Blue Line alone was not enough to bring about positive change in the inner city communities along the transit corridor, especially since the line is situated along an abandoned rail line that traverses across large industrial areas with low density. The authors argue that it takes more than the construction of a transit line to spur economic development in the inner city; it takes strategic placement of station areas in dense, pedestrian-friendly locations, comprehensive design plans for station areas, institutional commitment from the private and public sectors, and community involvement to combat inner city decline with TOD.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these barriers, the inner city provides many advantages to investors and developers that are not present in suburban communities. TOD in the inner city has immense potential for success due to the naturally higher concentration of residents, jobs and other business amenities and services all within proximity to one another. Hess and Lombardi argue that “TOD is less likely to succeed in places with few amenities to claim as a locational advantage, which further strengthens arguments for urban locations (with higher densities and mixed land use) over suburban locations.”<sup>38</sup> Although building transit corridors in suburban communities avoids the complications that come with development in the inner city, it also

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<sup>36</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, “Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey,” 87.

<sup>37</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Tridib Banerjee, “The Blue Line Blues: Why the Vision of Transit Village May Not Materialize Despite Impressive Growth in Transit Ridership,” 119-121.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Baldwin Hess and Peter A. Lombardi, “Policy Support for and Barriers to Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: Literature Review,” 31.

avoids connecting already existing activity centers to transit and contributes to the fragmentation of America's cities.

#### **2.4 TOD's Missing Equity Agenda**

The challenges facing TOD in America's inner city demonstrates the lack of focus on social and economic equity in today's TOD movement. Although the expansive amount of TOD literature provides a comprehensive overview of the current status of TOD in the United States, community interests, class/race dynamics and transit equity issues are largely absent from the literature. Although the California Department of Transportation mentions an increase of affordable housing as a component of TOD, it neglects to discuss direct economic and social benefits that TOD can have within the surrounding community. Furthermore, the 2004 Transit Cooperative Research Program report asserts that TOD contributes to the "revitalization of declining neighborhoods,"<sup>39</sup> which diminishes the value of the already existing community by suggesting that they are in need of some outside project to come in and revive their struggling neighborhood. Aside from a small number of TOD experts advocating for TOD in the inner city, such as Loukaitou-Sideris, there are few TOD researchers and players discussing the potential that TOD has to empower local, urban residents and encourage community participation in planning for the future development and growth of their neighborhoods. By building upon already existing assets within the community and listening to local voices, TOD can directly benefit local residents and curb the risk of gentrification.

Additionally, the California Department of Transportation explicitly states that "local community concerns" pose a threat to the execution of TOD projects. More specifically, local

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<sup>39</sup> Transit Cooperative Research Program, *TCRP Report 102: Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experience, Challenges, and Prospects*, 134.

communities are often concerned that TOD will “change the character of the community” with the onset of “density and traffic.”<sup>40</sup> Local community participation, however, is vital to the success of TOD projects and addressing equity issues, such as access to transit and the development of affordable housing. *The New Transit Town* describes many examples in which a lack of community involvement led to the failure of TOD projects across America. Specifically, as mentioned above, a TOD project at the Lindbergh Station in Atlanta was met with large community protests when the local government found a large corporate tenant for the project. The surrounding single-family neighborhood protested the project due to high density and excessive amounts of parking that the corporate tenant would usher into their community. *The New Transit Town* argues that if the Atlanta government had involved the residents in the planning process from the beginning, they would not have been met with such a negative reaction to the project.<sup>41</sup>

*The New Transit Town* recognizes the lack of community involvement in many TOD projects and the importance of community input within the planning process:

Because the community is the best and most important source of local knowledge, community members are the actors best equipped to help a project attain that intangible ‘sense of place’ that will capture value for all its partners. All partners will also benefit when the community is involved early enough that their concerns can be addressed up front...<sup>42</sup>

In the case of the Lindbergh Station project, we learned that “community involvement is essential to creating good projects.”<sup>43</sup> However, the community in the Lindbergh Station case study, as well as in most TOD projects, was a suburban, single-family neighborhood. *The New*

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<sup>40</sup> Terry Parker and BG Arrington, “Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Study: Factors for Success in California,” 9.

<sup>41</sup> Dena Belzer, et al., “The Transit-Oriented Development Drama and Its Actors,” 52.

<sup>42</sup> Dena Belzer, et al., “The Transit-Oriented Development Drama and Its Actors,” 52.

<sup>43</sup> Sharon Feigon, David Hoyt, and Gloria Ohland, “The Atlanta Case Study: Lindbergh City Center,” in *The New Transit Town*, eds. Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004), 189.

*Transit Town* and most other current TOD literature excludes urban, low-income communities from the comprehensive TOD picture and fails to discuss TOD's potential ability to provide equity within high density, low-income communities. More precisely, by supplying access to transit to those underserved populations who need it the most, TOD has the potential to create an equity agenda in addition to its environmental and economic goals.

Ultimately, the fact that local governments, as well as much of the TOD literature, view community concerns as one of the biggest barriers to TOD rather than an important consideration within the planning process reveals a systematic lack of concern for already existing residents in potential TOD districts. This lack of consideration for community concerns and involvement is often due to the focus of TOD advocates on facilitating re-urbanization and new residential development, such as the new, high-priced condominiums along the Gold Line in Pasadena.

In a 2004 TOD literature review in the *Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, the authors report that there are significant barriers to developing in dense, urban neighborhoods, and these barriers perhaps explain the slow implementation and lack of research regarding TOD in low-income, inner city areas. Due to the "naturally high concentrations of residences, jobs, and amenities" in dense, inner city neighborhoods, as discussed above, "TOD perhaps holds greater potential for success" in these urban areas.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the authors of *The New Transit Town* admit that TOD researchers and players still have "little understanding of the full range of benefits that can be achieved with TOD."<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, the lack of TOD literature and practices regarding low-income communities in the urban core exposes this partial understanding of the potential that TOD has to create a sustainable and equitable urban America.

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<sup>44</sup> Daniel Baldwin Hess and Peter A. Lombardi, "Policy Support for and Barriers to Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: Literature Review," 31.

<sup>45</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," 8.

### Chapter 3: Transit Equity and TOD in the Inner City

Federal transportation funding and policies overwhelmingly favor highways and cars over public transit systems in American cities. Since a majority of public transit users are low-income, nonwhite inner city residents, auto-oriented federal transportation policies discriminate against minority communities in the urban core.<sup>46</sup> As Sanchez, Stolz, and Ma argue in their 2003 *Civil Rights Project* report, federal transportation policies “have had inequitable effects on minority and low-income populations” by restricting their access to adequate housing, jobs, schools and many other services.<sup>47</sup> Although federal, state and local transportation funding has recently found a renewed interest in urban rail, many city planners and policymakers target suburban residents by constructing commuter rail lines (rather than expanding upon already overcrowded bus lines) that do not serve the needs of low-income, transit-dependent communities. TOD, as a means to create sustainable urban neighborhoods that integrate transit, jobs, housing, schools and other services and amenities into and for the benefit of the surrounding community, has the potential to redirect public funding and resources toward transit and development in the inner city. By examining the rise and fall of public transit systems in American cities, we can understand how transit equity issues arose and, furthermore, how TOD has failed to realize, yet nevertheless holds, the potential to remedy transit inequity in the inner city.

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<sup>46</sup> Robert D. Bullard, “New Routes to Transportation Equity: Why Race Still Matters,” *Transportation Equity* 6, no. 1 (2003): par 7, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/transequenewsvol6.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas W. Sanchez, Rich Stolz, and Jacinta S. Ma, “Moving to Equity: Addressing Inequitable Effects of Transportation Policies in Minorities,” *The Civil Rights Project* at Harvard University, 2003, vi.

### 3.1 History of TOD and Transit Equity in American Cities

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, streetcar lines and interurban rail replaced walking and horse-drawn carts as the primary modes of transportation. These new transit systems greatly increased the physical boundaries of most major American cities and gave rise to new opportunities for mobility and community development.<sup>48</sup> Along the transit corridors, private developers built retail and recreational amenities to serve commuters and local communities. Streetcar systems not only introduced new patterns of travel and transportation, but also spurred new forms of housing production, economic development and neighborhood design.<sup>49</sup> America's early streetcar systems, therefore, generated an interconnected and interdependent web of transit, jobs and housing – a primary objective of TOD today.

By providing transit between the communities on the fringe and jobs in the urban core, as Sam Bass Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs* argues, private investors and real estate developers created a "two part city – a city of work separated from a city of homes."<sup>50</sup> In Los Angeles, for instance, the early streetcar systems in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries gave rise to the suburban communities of Glendale, Santa Monica and Pasadena.<sup>51</sup> By directly linking jobs in the urban core to residential neighborhoods on the periphery, the streetcar became a daily part of American life.

The rise of automobile usage in the 1920s and 1930s, however, transformed America's early suburbs into sprawling communities no longer in proximity to transit stations. Production of Henry Ford's Model T in 1920 led to a significant increase in car ownership due to the vehicle's relative simplicity and affordability. General Motors, Ford's rival, simultaneously

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997): 15.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and The MIT Press, 1962): 4.

<sup>51</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," 5.



formulated advancements in design and development with the intent of making cars “more and more a part of daily life” for American citizens.<sup>52</sup> The explosive growth of car ownership in the 1920s and 1930s across urban and suburban America resulted in sprawling neighborhoods with freeways, instead of streetcar systems, as the primary means of mobility.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, American cities ushered in high levels of freeway development and construction. The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act “codified the central role of building freeways in the city”<sup>54</sup> by providing enormous financial support and resources to the construction and design of intra- and interstate highways.

The post-war installation of America’s massive road and highway infrastructure solidified the automobile as America’s preferred mode of transportation. Furthermore, the post-war establishment of America’s expansive highway system enhanced opportunities for developers beyond the confines of public transit systems by providing access to available land on the outer suburban fringes. Thus, the rise of the automobile fractured the link between development and transit.

American investors and real estate agencies no longer directed development toward transit-dependent communities, but toward those communities dependent on cars and freeways. As the majority of federal transportation funds supported the construction of roads and promotion of the automobile as the dominant mode of transportation, rail systems in post-war American cities became obsolete. With the dismantling of America’s urban rail systems, buses became the primary form of public transit in most American cities. The post-war disinvestment in public transit, however, created bus systems that became “subservient to the automobile.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 178.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 29-30.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 193.

<sup>55</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., “An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development,” 5.

*The New Transit Town* asserts that with America's massive investment of finances and resources into its immense highway system, "Transit became the travel mode of last resort and ceased to shape development."<sup>56</sup>

The rise of the automobile and the abandonment of interurban rail left American cities with substandard bus systems. Buses became the main mode of transit for the poor, nonwhite inner city communities and received little or no investment during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The automobile and freeways, on the other hand, served as the primary mode of transportation for America's white, suburban middle-class residents and continued to receive federal investment and attract private development.

Nevertheless, with America's recently renewed local, state and federal interest in urban rail systems and resurgence of investment in America's urban centers, cities like San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles are once again investing in their public transit systems. However, as Robert Gottlieb discusses in *Reinventing Los Angeles*, municipal and federal investment in urban rail has spurred a new debate: bus versus rail, rather than transit versus the automobile. This new debate, Gottlieb contends, reveals class, race and ethnicity dimensions associated with urban rail and inner city buses.<sup>57</sup> Many transit equity advocates argue that urban rail lines tend to attract middle- and upper-class Americans, while buses remain stigmatized as transit for the poor. Public investment, therefore, is aimed toward the development and advancement of suburban rail rather than inner city bus systems. This trend not only exposes social inequity and racial discrimination within America's current investment in public transit, but also reveals a lack of attention to equity and thus an absence of TOD in the inner city.

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<sup>56</sup> Hank Dittmar, et al., "An Introduction to Transit-Oriented Development," 6.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 184.

### 3.2 Transit Inequity in the Inner City

“All transit is not created equal,” says transit equity expert and advocate Robert Bullard argues,<sup>58</sup> In his 2003 article, “New Routes to Transportation Equity,” Bullard describes how class and racial segregation within America’s public transit system explains the relative abundance of public investment in urban rail systems and the lack of spending on the improvement and expansion of inner city bus systems:

Most transit systems have tended to take their low-income and people of color “captive riders” for granted and concentrated their fare and service policies on attracting middle-class and affluent riders out of their cars. Moreover, transit subsidies have tended to favor investment in suburban transit and expensive new commuter bus and rail lines that disproportionately serve wealthier “discretionary riders.”<sup>59</sup>

Bullard and many other transit equity authors argue that public funding for transit is aimed at attracting these “discretionary riders” (i.e. middle- and upper-class Americans who are not dependent on public transit but occasionally choose to use it) away from the freeways rather than on improving the already existing transit infrastructure for America’s “captive riders”(i.e. low-income, nonwhite, inner city residents largely dependent on public transit). As a review of TOD literature in the previous chapter reveals, the same type of discrimination occurs in TOD projects. Just as investors and developers shy away from TOD projects in the inner city, public investments lean toward constructing suburban rail rather than improving urban bus lines.

Although public dollars tend to support suburban rail more than inner city bus lines, federal spending on transportation overwhelmingly favors highways over all urban transit systems. The federal government sets aside 80% of the nation’s surface transportation funds for

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<sup>58</sup> Robert D. Bullard, “New Routes to Transportation Equity: Why Race Still Matters,” par 5, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/transequenewsvol6.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Robert D. Bullard, “New Routes to Transportation Equity: Why Race Still Matters” par 5, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/transequenewsvol6.htm>.

highways and 20% for public transit.<sup>60</sup> This unequal allocation of federal transportation funding clearly supports America's auto-users and neglects its inner city transit-users. The fact that transportation is the second largest household expenditure in America (behind housing) and disproportionately burdens low-income and poor population compounds this unfair distribution of federal transportation funding. Furthermore, starting primarily in the 1950s and 1960s, city planners and road builders constructed major highways through low-income, nonwhite, urban communities.<sup>61</sup> By building physical barriers through residential neighborhoods, federal dollars go directly into dismantling minority neighborhoods.

Additionally, the construction of highways in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the relocation of many jobs and housing to suburban communities outside of the urban core. Since populations dependent on public transit are mostly low-income minority residents of the inner city,<sup>62</sup> highway construction significantly decreased access to jobs, adequate housing, schools, health care facilities, grocery stores and other services. As Bullard describes, the "exodus of low-skilled jobs" to the suburbs has affected inner city neighborhoods more than suburban communities since urban residents face limited choices of transit and housing.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, the disproportionate investment of federal transportation funds isolated inner city residents in the urban core and denied these communities access to job and education opportunities.

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<sup>60</sup> Robert D. Bullard, "New Routes to Transportation Equity: Why Race Still Matters" par 3, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/transequenewsvol6.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas W. Sanchez, Rich Stolz, and Jacinta S. Ma, "Moving to Equity: Addressing Inequitable Effects of Transportation Policies in Minorities," 2003, vi.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas W. Sanchez, Rich Stolz, and Jacinta S. Ma, "Moving to Equity: Addressing Inequitable Effects of Transportation Policies in Minorities," vii.

<sup>63</sup> Robert D. Bullard, "New Routes to Transportation Equity: Why Race Still Matters" par 14, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/transequenewsvol6.htm>.

### 3.3 TOD: Combating Transit Injustices in the Inner City

In his 2003 article, Bullard alludes to the mutually beneficial relationship between economic development and transit in inner city neighborhoods: “Some grassroots leaders [are] struggling to get public transit systems linked to jobs and economic activity centers and to get workers paid a livable wage so that they can also have transportation options.”<sup>64</sup> Transit equity authors and some TOD researchers are exploring the connection between the underserved transit-dependent communities in the inner city and the potential benefits of developing around transit. The relationship between TOD and transit equity, however, has yet be clearly defined. Since TOD aims to create sustainable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods by developing housing and business around and in conjunction with transit development, TOD in the inner city can address transit inequity by attracting investment away from new freeways and back to already existing transit infrastructures in the urban core.

TOD does not have to be a process in which private developers and city agencies assist in the gentrification of low-income neighborhoods by building rail lines flanked with luxury condominiums. Instead, TOD can be a means to address transit injustices, inadequate housing and struggling local businesses in the inner city. Ultimately, TOD can combat transit inequity and enhance mobility and access to jobs and other services by redirecting public transportation funds toward the already existing bus and rail infrastructure in inner city neighborhoods.<sup>65</sup> Transit inequity in the inner city drives the need for a TOD equity agenda.

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<sup>64</sup> Robert D. Bullard, “New Routes to Transportation Equity: Why Race Still Matters” par 25, <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/transequenewsvol6.htm>.

<sup>65</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, “Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey,” 90.

## Chapter 4: Los Angeles – A Transit-Oriented Metropolis

When Vancouver-based city planning professor and transit advocate Gordon Price came to Los Angeles in February 2008 as part of Livable Places' *Envisioning Green Los Angeles* speaker series, he described how his native city's increasingly high density and mix of uses in downtown created streets with a "vitality and a safety that encouraged walking." As mixed-use development flourished in the late 1990s, over half of Vancouver's downtown residents began "substituting feet for wheels,"<sup>66</sup> an ostensibly unfathomable concept here in Los Angeles. Unlike many urban planners and smart growth advocates, however, Price finds a common thread between our seemingly disparate cities:

[When] I come to your city, what strikes me is that you've already got, as we do, the legacy of the streetcar system: retail villages and boulevards that look not much different than the neighborhoods I'm used to. What's missing is foot traffic.<sup>67</sup>

Although many Angelenos do not associate the pedestrian with their city, many of Los Angeles' central city neighborhoods, including Westlake, Pico Union, MacArthur Park and many areas of downtown, contain the necessary elements to create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. As Price mentions, Los Angeles' transit-oriented roots as a region once cloaked by an extensive streetcar system emerge even through the city's auto-oriented roadways. At its heart, Los Angeles is one of America's early transit towns and holds to potential to once again reorient toward transit and away from the automobile.

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<sup>66</sup> Gordon Price, "Vancouver's Eco-Density," February 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Gordon Price, "Vancouver's Eco-Density," February 2008.

#### 4.1 An Original Transit Town

Beneath Los Angeles' infamous network of freeways lies the remains of an expansive rail system. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pacific Electric Railway Company established the region's wide-ranging transit system connecting all of Southern California's major urban centers. Since the rail lines were the region's primary mode of transportation, interurban transit became embedded in the region's landscape. At its peak, the rail lines were running 6,000 streetcars a day on 115 routes spanning over 1,000 miles of track.<sup>68</sup> By 1910, the Pacific Electric Railway was the largest interurban system in the country, making Southern California "one of the great transit metropolises of all time."<sup>69</sup>

Starting in 1896, Pacific Electric rivals, Los Angeles Railway and Pasadena Railway, built the first interurban rail line connecting downtown Los Angeles to both Pasadena and Santa Monica. In 1901, Henry Huntington, a wealthy visionary who viewed transit as a necessary step toward the successful growth of the Los Angeles region,<sup>70</sup> purchased and became president of Pacific Electric. Under Huntington's leadership, the railway enveloped Southern California, reaching nearly 50 communities within the Los Angeles region. Similar to the New York City subway system today, Pacific Electric's "Big Red Car" became a familiar part of daily life for the residents of Southern California.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike Los Angeles' current transit system, Huntington privately funded the Pacific Electric Railway. As *Streetcar Suburbs* describes, private investment in development and transit at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century changed the American cityscape by creating suburban communities on the urban fringes. Specifically, in Los Angeles, Huntington purchased inexpensive land on the

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<sup>68</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 178.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 21.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 20.

periphery of the city's urban core. In order to boost the value of his newly obtained land, Huntington built transit corridors connecting his suburban property to downtown Los Angeles. Huntington not only raised the land value on the metropolitan fringe, but created suburban communities deeply reliant on transit for mobility and access to the urban core. In *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero claim that Huntington "saw a chance to break the bonds of the traditional city" by enabling development to grow outward into numerous communities, but remaining connected to the metropolitan center.<sup>72</sup>

Due to Huntington's investment in transit and development, Los Angeles' early streetcar system has had an immense and lasting imprint on the region's physical form. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the streetcar system defined the cityscape by allowing the city to create a unique balance between the built and natural environments. The rail system established a collection of communities composed of mostly single-family homes, strung together by an expansive transit system. As early as 1920, however, auto-oriented suburbs began to replace streetcar suburbs, which rapidly changed the urban form. With the rise of auto-oriented suburbs, residents no longer lived within proximity to transit. In Southern California, the mix of streetcars and automobiles on the same roadways caused congestion, and streetcar lines turned into a hassle rather than a societal asset. Although the city's rail service remained vital for many urban commuters, it also became the target of pro-automobile forces criticizing the system for delays and increased fares.<sup>73</sup>

Responding to traffic congestion and the contending roles of streetcars and automobiles on shared roadways in the mid-1920s, the City of Los Angeles proposed two policy options for the planning of its future transportation infrastructure: a transit-oriented proposal and an

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 180.



automobile-oriented proposal. The transit-oriented proposal called for light rail and subway lines that would converge in downtown Los Angeles and remedy transit-automobile traffic congestion on the street level. The automobile-oriented proposal called for a massive freeway infrastructure that would establish several north-south, east-west automobile corridors containing at least 3 lanes.<sup>74</sup> During the same period, Vancouver, B.C. also proposed a similar set of policy choices.<sup>75</sup> Vancouver chose the former, and Los Angeles the latter. Not surprisingly, each city gained unique and opposite reputations: Vancouver as a high density, pedestrian-oriented metropolis with lively streetscapes, and Los Angeles as a car-oriented collection of sprawling and segregated communities.

By the 1930s, Los Angeles had laid more miles of asphalt per capita than any other American city.<sup>76</sup> Although the debate surrounding Los Angeles' transportation plan continued, the automobile became rooted in the region's culture as a symbol of the Southern California lifestyle.<sup>77</sup> While Pacific Electric began to neglect its urban passengers and opt for freight service (despite increased number of passengers), the auto-oriented transportation system of freeways prevailed.<sup>78</sup> The shift from interurban rail to automobiles and freeways represents the early demise of transit in Los Angeles. Following the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, transit company ownership in Los Angeles shifted from private to public. By this point, the city's urban rail system had collapsed into a massive freeway infrastructure and public agencies were left with a skeleton of Los Angeles' formerly praised and widely used transit system.

Contrary to popular misconception, however, the automobile and freeways do not dominate Los Angeles as they once did in the 1950s and through the 1970s. Bernick and Cervero

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 30.

<sup>75</sup> Gordon Price, "Vancouver's Eco-Density," February 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 31.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 180.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 180.

claim that Los Angeles' years without adequate transit services "proved to be short-lived."<sup>79</sup> Starting in the 1980s, Los Angeles County began planning for an extensive network of subway and light rail systems, and it now claims the second largest bus system in the country.<sup>80</sup> Los Angeles' 1980 Proposition A (a 5-year subsidy program using a half-cent sales tax, providing \$340 million per year, to reduce bus fares) and 1990 Proposition C (a half-cent sales tax to expand public transit system) attempted to create clear guidelines for the allocation of funds for its expanding transit system. The County and City's financial investments in the region's public transit system sought to recreate and surpass the legacy of Huntington's privately owned and operated rail system. Gottlieb claims that the increased interest and investment in transit as a viable mode of transportation has "allowed Los Angeles to conceive, for the first time in more than 50 years, a transportation future that no longer remained the exclusive province of the car and the freeway."<sup>81</sup>

Renewal in transit investment, however, has led to a heated "bus versus rail" debate and revealed institutionalized discrimination along class and race lines. In order to understand the adverse effects of the region's recent shift of public funding from bus to rail, we must examine Los Angeles' long history of transit inequity in inner city neighborhoods.

#### **4.2 Transit Inequity and TOD in Los Angeles' Inner City Neighborhoods**

With the mid-century cultivation of Southern California's obsession with the car, Los Angeles' bus system suffered along with its interurban rail lines. During the 1980s and 1990s, American cities' renewed interest in the development of commuter rail lines from downtown districts to

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 31.

<sup>80</sup> Eric Mann, "Los Angeles Bus Riders Derail the MTA," in *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism & New Routes to Equity*, eds. Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson and Angel O. Torres (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004), 33.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 214.

suburban communities took even more funding away from urban bus services. In addition to the shift of investment from bus to rail, many factors led to the decline of the city's bus service, including ever-present auto-oriented transportation planning choices and social and cultural factors that stigmatize the bus as transit for the poor and "[create] a climate of vulnerability and fear for bus riders."<sup>82</sup> Since Los Angeles' bus riders are a majority low-income, nonwhite inner city residents, as Eric Mann describes in several essays on transit inequity in Los Angeles, the disinvestment in the city's bus system reveals institutionalized racial discrimination against minority transit users. Mann argues that buses have become an avenue of last resort for Los Angeles' inner city residents, and as the city's urban poor becomes increasingly nonwhite, so does bus ridership.<sup>83</sup> Los Angeles' low-income, nonwhite urban residents, therefore, bear the greatest burdens from the recent investment shift from bus to rail.

Although the "bus versus rail" debate only recently came to light in the late 1980s and 1990s, the establishment of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) in 1976 as a complementary yet essentially competitive agency to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) institutionalized the city's early transit dichotomy. MTA was responsible for the oversight of bus services, while LACTC was primarily responsible for rail lines. With two agencies handling the same pool of funding for public transit in Los Angeles, the allocation of public dollars between bus and rail services became a zero-sum situation. As each agency competed for funds, a growing polarization within the public transit sector occurred. Since much of the recent rail development is commuter rail connecting suburban communities to downtown, while bus services primarily serve local inner city residents, the

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<sup>82</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 211.

<sup>83</sup> Eric Mann, "Confronting Transit Racism in Los Angeles," in *Just Transportation: Dismantling Race & Class Barriers to Mobility*, eds. Robert D. Bullard and Glenn S. Johnson (Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society Publishers, 1997), 69.

institutionalization of “bus versus rail” led to divergent and disproportionate funding between low-income, nonwhite communities and more affluent, white, suburban communities.<sup>84</sup>

Today, MTA, recently renamed Metro, plans, constructs and operates public transit across Los Angeles County.<sup>85</sup> (Each incorporated city in the County has its own separate bus service in addition to Metro’s transit system.) Even though bus services and rail lines are now under one umbrella, Metro has recently shifted funding from bus to rail in order to attract middle-class auto-users away from the roads and onto the trains. Consequently, Metro has cut a number of bus lines and increased fares, leading to longer wait times and overcrowding of bus lines. Additionally, many bus stops have limited lighting and no type of shelter, often attracting crime.<sup>86</sup> The favoritism of rail lines and neglect of buses disproportionately isolates and hinders the mobility of inner city residents. In 1996, the community-based Bus Riders’ Union settled a lawsuit against Metro for racial discrimination against Los Angeles’ nonwhite, urban residents by funding new rail lines while discarding many bus services.<sup>87</sup> Although the case established a precedent for transit equity in American cities, Metro still favors the development of new rail over the maintenance and growth of its bus system.

The recent development of rail, however, has ushered in a region-wide interest in TOD. As mentioned in previous chapters, planners and developers embark upon TOD projects around suburban rail rather than inner city transit, which often include a complex network of rail and bus lines. In order to successfully implement TOD in Los Angeles’ urban communities, as well as in its suburban communities, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning needs to incorporate

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<sup>84</sup> Eric Mann, “Confronting Transit Racism in Los Angeles,” 70.

<sup>85</sup> Eric Mann, “Los Angeles Bus Riders Derail the MTA,” 33.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Reinventing Los Angeles*, 212.

<sup>87</sup> Eric Mann, “Los Angeles Bus Riders Derail the MTA,” 40.

TOD directly into the City's General Plan, and more specifically, into its local Community Plans.

### **4.3 Planning for TOD in Los Angeles**

Although planning for TOD in Los Angeles' inner city neighborhoods faces many challenges, Loukaitou-Sideris argues that TOD is already major component of Los Angeles' Citywide General Plan, a comprehensive, long-term strategy for the current and future growth of the city, since it directs 75% of all new development onto only 5 percent of the City's land, predominantly around rail stations and bus stops.<sup>88</sup> Due to the sheer size of Los Angeles, however, a single comprehensive plan cannot realistically guide the future growth of the region. Thus, the Land Use Element of the General Plan divides the city into 35 Community Plan Areas. (See Appendix A for complete list of Community Plans and Appendix B for a map of Los Angeles Community Plan Areas.) Each community plan acts as a "blueprint for guiding growth and development"<sup>89</sup> in its designated area of Los Angeles. The community plans allocate land for a range of uses, including housing, jobs, transportation, business, industry and open space. Furthermore, the community plans are supposed to reflect the "housing, commercial, employment, educational, cultural, social and aesthetic"<sup>90</sup> needs of the city's residents. However, the community plans are only updated about every 10 years, and thus many communities in Los Angeles are left with very outdated plans that do not necessarily reflect the needs of each area's current residents.

In order to maintain up-to-date community plans, the Los Angeles Planning Department established the New Community Plan Program (NCPP), which "aims to encourage sustainable

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<sup>88</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 78.

<sup>89</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, "What is the Community Plan?" February 27, 2008.

<sup>90</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/>.

growth patterns while balancing the unique character of individual communities.”<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the NCPP will also address issues around “design, transportation and mobility.”<sup>92</sup> Currently, the NCPP is studying and updating the plans for 12 community plan areas of Los Angeles, including Westlake. (See Appendix A for a list of Community Plans that currently being updated.)

The NCPP emphasizes the importance of community input in the planning process and asserts that the collaboration between community members and the planning department will establish policies and programs intended to benefit community plan area residents. In fact, the State of California requires citizen participation in the preparation of Los Angeles’ General Plan (See Government Code Section 65351). Updating the community plans through the direct input of citizens is essential not only to plan for future visions and objectives, but also to assess the current living conditions of Los Angeles residents. Updating community plans, therefore, is a means in which Los Angeles residents can be directly involved in planning for the future growth and development of Los Angeles. More specifically, the community plan update process, provides a vehicle for the implementation of TOD equity agenda; an agenda that ushers in economic development, affordable housing and access to jobs and transit while curbing the risk residential displacement and gentrification through land-use policies.

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<sup>91</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/>.

<sup>92</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/>.

## Chapter 5: Westlake – Los Angeles’ Homegrown Transit Village

“Westlake has been a transit-oriented district for as long as I can remember,” says Rony Giron, planning assistant at the Los Angeles Department of City Planning. “It has grown organically without the need of any governmental organization recognizing it formally. Residents are already using public transportation at rates [that are] the envy of many municipalities in the U.S.” In fact, 61% of Westlake’s workers use public transit as their primary means of mobility, a remarkable six times the citywide average of 10%.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, with Metro’s recent disinvestment in bus services in Los Angeles, Westlake’s transit users are growing more and more “frustrated with the inferior quality of the infrastructure and transportation system.”<sup>94</sup> More specifically, Westlake’s transit users have to cope with extreme overcrowding, unsafe and unsanitary transit stops, and an embarrassing lack of bus benches and shelters. One Westlake resident describes getting on and off the bus as “nearly impossible, especially during rush hour.” Although Westlake is inherently transit-oriented due to such high ridership, as Giron describes, the City of Los Angeles needs to invest in and develop its transit infrastructure to more adequately and justly serve its low-income, mostly nonwhite constituents.

However, how does Westlake increase accessibility to transit, jobs and affordable housing to its already existing residents, without resulting in residential displacement? More specifically, how can the City of Los Angeles implement TOD as a tool to remedy transit injustices and inequity rather than a mechanism that spurs gentrification?

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<sup>93</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 3.

<sup>94</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 1.

## **5.1 Methodology**

In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the diverse perspectives regarding the implementation of TOD in Los Angeles' urban neighborhoods, particularly in Westlake, research for this study included both qualitative methods, including interviews and photo documentation, and quantitative methods, including the collection of 2006 U.S. Census data as to explore the relationships between transit corridors and transit ridership in Westlake.

Formal interviews with representatives from Metro, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, the Central City Neighborhood Partners, the Department of Urban Planning at the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, as well as several informal interviews with community members and residents of Westlake at community meetings and at the street level occurred between January and March of 2008. (See Appendix C for a comprehensive summary of the primary interview questions.) On March 3, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning held an Environmental Impact Report scoping meeting as part of the community plan update process at the MacArthur Park Recreation Center. Although the meeting was designated to a relatively specific component of the community plan, Westlake community members and residents shared a plethora of important issues that they think are crucial to address in the Westlake Community Plan update, much of which appears in the following case study.

## **5.2 Westlake Community Profile**

Located directly west of downtown, Westlake is one of Los Angeles' most vibrant yet severely underserved inner city neighborhoods. As the 1997 Westlake Community Plan describes, the area contains many assets, including substantial commercial development, pedestrian-oriented activity and a large, public recreational space, MacArthur Park. Due to perceived risk and stigma



surrounding development in the inner city, however, Westlake suffers from severe public and private disinvestment. As a result, Westlake residents are forced to cope with unsanitary streets, inadequate transit facilities, and a severe shortage of affordable housing.

Lifelong Westlake resident and community advocate, Evelin Montes, says, “People see Westlake as blighted, but it’s because we aren’t getting serviced proportional to density.” Although Westlake occupies less than 1% (approximately 3.17 square miles<sup>95</sup>) of the land in the City,<sup>96</sup> the total population is 117,884, resulting in the most densely populated neighborhood in Los Angeles, with a population density of 37,237 people per square mile.<sup>97</sup> According to the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, over 95% of Westlake residents are nonwhite: 77.56% Hispanic/Latino, 12.82% Asian, 4.02% Black and 1.41% other races.<sup>98</sup> Like many inner city neighborhoods, Westlake was not originally an underserved, nonwhite inner city neighborhood.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Westlake experienced its greatest development, which continued well into the 1920s.<sup>99</sup> As one of the first areas of Los Angeles to experience residential development, Westlake became an affluent, single-family neighborhood complete with Art Deco mansions (many of which now house multi-family apartments). During this period, Westlake not only became home to Los Angeles’ wealthy businessmen and their families, but also attracted Los Angeles’ Filipino population to the district’s northeastern edge (in proximity to today’s Filipinotown).<sup>100</sup> Pacific Electric’s streetcar system dominated the streets and became Westlake’s

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<sup>95</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, “Local Area Profile: Population & Housing Estimates,” April 2008, <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/DRU/LocL/LocPfl.cfm?geo=cp&loc=Wlk#Note1>.

<sup>96</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, *Westlake Community Plan*, a part of the General Plans of the City of Los Angeles, September 1997, I-1.

<sup>97</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, “Local Area Profile: Population & Housing Estimates,” <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/DRU/LocL/LocPfl.cfm?geo=cp&loc=Wlk#Note1>.

<sup>98</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, “Local Area Profile: Population & Housing Estimates,” <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/DRU/LocL/LocPfl.cfm?geo=cp&loc=Wlk#Note1>.

<sup>99</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, *Westlake Community Plan*, I-1.

<sup>100</sup> Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in the Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 61.

primary transportation option. Until the installation of Los Angeles' freeway infrastructure in the 1950s, Westlake remained a popular recreational area and weekend destination for the city's middle- and upper-class residents. Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Westlake's "turquoise lake and colorful rowboats" in MacArthur Park symbolized the area as an urban oasis.<sup>101</sup>

In conjunction with many other inner city neighborhoods in Los Angeles, including Wilshire Center (now Koreatown) and downtown's Bunker Hill district, the dismantling of Pacific Electric's streetcar system and the construction of Los Angeles' network of freeways triggered the flight of Westlake's affluent, white residents to West Los Angeles and other suburbs. Consequently, the lack of access to transit and jobs isolated Westlake's low-income, nonwhite community in Los Angeles' increasingly struggling inner city. By the 1980s, Bernick and Cervero describe Westlake as "a crowded, unattractive urban district noted for its population of poor immigrant households, run-down apartment buildings...and a subculture of crime and drug dealing common to center-city areas."<sup>102</sup>

Although Bernick and Cervero's illustration of Westlake holds some accuracy, this type of characterization, which depicted Westlake as a crime-ridden community of nonwhite immigrants, directly contributed to the public and private disinvestment in Westlake's housing and transit infrastructure. As a result of disinvestment throughout the 1980s, Westlake's recently arrived and impoverished Guatemalan and Salvadorian communities (mostly refugees from the Central American civil wars at the time) along with many other Central American and Filipino immigrant populations, suffered from public neglect and a lack of economic development. As one of Los Angeles' traditional immigrant entry points, Westlake presented the city's newcomers

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<sup>101</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 247.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 247.

with “the gritty reality of deteriorating housing and increasing crime.”<sup>103</sup> With the influx of Central American immigrants throughout the 1980s, however, Salvadoran and Nicaraguan restaurants, Guatemalan markets and Honduran bakeries transformed Westlake into a lively immigrant hub.<sup>104</sup> Although Westlake suffered from extreme disinvestment and public neglect during the 1980s, Westlake’s diverse and vibrant communities have created a solid and unique cultural and social fabric.

Today, Westlake upholds a lively streetscape full of pedestrians and increasing local economic activity. Additionally, Westlake has experienced an increase of commercial development along its main commercial corridors (i.e. primarily along sections of Wilshire Blvd, Alvarado Blvd and Olympic Blvd). However, Westlake continues to suffer from public disinvestment and inadequate services, specifically, a lack of public funds to rectify slum-like living conditions as well as an absence of social services, healthcare facilities and appropriate sanitation services. Los Angeles’ current housing shortage, leading to less affordable housing options and higher rents, disproportionately burdens Westlake’s low-income, nonwhite residents. Immigrants and other minority residents often “double up, with two families sharing a two-bedroom apartment and pooling funds for rent, food, and utilities.”<sup>105</sup>

Additionally, the recent investment and development shift from bus to rail adversely affects Westlake residents. Since over half of Westlake residents depend on public transit, disinvestment in bus services has led to an inadequate transit infrastructure unfairly burdening Los Angeles’ minority, inner city community. As described in the previous chapter, Westlake

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<sup>103</sup> Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in the Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*, 53.

<sup>104</sup> Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in the Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*, 59.

<sup>105</sup> Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in the Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles*, 62.

exemplifies an inner city neighborhood wrought with transit inequity, and thus a lack of access to many services and amenities. In response to the “deplorable and unfair” living conditions, a member of the Los Angeles community-based advocacy group *Coalition LA* asserts, “Westlake needs to plan for housing, jobs and transportation amenities that serve already existing residents,” rather than drawing in affluent outsiders with the development of attractive housing and transit options. Another resident agrees, “We need to plan for the future of current Westlake residents. We want to see development and better living conditions, but we want to be the ones receiving the benefits.”

### **5.3 Current Transit Conditions in Westlake**

Public transit clearly plays a vital role in the Westlake community. With over 60% of Westlake residents using public transit on a daily basis,<sup>106</sup> it is not surprising that only 49% of households in Westlake own a car.<sup>107</sup> Since Westlake residents depend on transit to get to work, school, and childcare, it is important to maintain an accessible, seamless transit infrastructure in order to properly serve local residents. As James Rojas, founder of the local transit reform advocacy group, Latino Urban Forum, describes, “public funds are essential to fixing Los Angeles’ transportation infrastructure.” In order to move toward improving transit service in Westlake, we need to assess the current transit conditions and identify areas of weakness within the transit infrastructure on which to improve.

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<sup>106</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 3.

<sup>107</sup> Jennifer Allen and Stephanie Taylor, *Westlake Walkabout: Summary Report*, August 2007, 1.

*Bus Lines and Bus Stops*

In Los Angeles County, the Metro (the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority) bus system serves 30,093,689 monthly riders.<sup>108</sup> In Westlake, three separate agencies currently provide bus services: Metro, LADOT (the City of Los Angeles' Commuter Express and DASH), and Foothill Transit. In total, these agencies provide 37 fixed-route bus lines (29 Metro, 4 LADOT and 3 Foothill Transit routes) to the Westlake Community Plan Area.<sup>109</sup> Assistant Planner Rony Giron claims that the biggest challenge to improving Westlake's transit infrastructure is "[coordinating] between the different transit agencies. The DASH system operated by the City of Los Angeles should complement Metro's bus lines." However, Metro recently announced that it would no longer reimburse LADOT for riders who use Metro passes to pay their fares on LADOT buses, so as of January 1, 2008, Los Angeles' bus riders could no longer use their Metro passes on Commuter Express or DASH buses. LADOT General Manager Rita L. Robinson said that the Department regrets being forced by Metro to take this action because, "There are many Metro pass holders riding on Commuter Express and DASH buses. We share the same service area, so pass acceptance had enabled riders to shift freely between the two systems."<sup>110</sup> Ultimately, the fragmentation of the bus service providers contributes to dissatisfactory bus service throughout Los Angeles, including Westlake.

Additionally, bus stops in Westlake are disproportionately substandard in comparison to stations along Metro's rail system or bus stops in more affluent areas of Los Angeles. According to the Central City Neighborhood Partners (CCNP) 2006 report, "Central City Community Transportation Plan," in which community organizations assess the current transit conditions in

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<sup>108</sup> Metro, "Ridership Statistics," February 2008, [http://www.metro.net/news\\_info/ridership\\_avg.htm#P99\\_1146](http://www.metro.net/news_info/ridership_avg.htm#P99_1146).

<sup>109</sup> Meyer, Mohaddes Associates, "Draft: Existing Conditions Report," *Westlake Community Plan Update: Transportation Improvement and Mitigation Program*, January 2007, 7.

<sup>110</sup> LADOT, "Metro Passes No Longer Valid on LADOT Services as of January 1, 2008," *What's New*, December 6, 2007, [http://www.ladottransit.com/whatsnew/120707\\_prMTA.html](http://www.ladottransit.com/whatsnew/120707_prMTA.html).

Westlake and Pico Union, most bus stops in Westlake have only the requisite sign, while only about one third (36%) have a bench and only one fifth (19%) have a shelter. Where benches do exist, many are made of hard concrete and often get too hot and unsanitary to use. Community members also feel that “bus stops are unsafe, lack lighting, and are dirty with trash and graffiti.”<sup>111</sup> Ultimately, the current state of bus stops in Westlake “make residents feel that the City and [Metro] do not respect them enough to create stops that are at a minimum functional, and better yet, comfortable.”<sup>112</sup> Since residents use buses to go to work as well as run daily errands, such as going to the grocery store, it is unacceptable to have substandard bus stops without shelters or even benches.

### *Pedestrians*

In June 2007, local community organizations CCNP, Livable Places, Coalition LA and Collective SPACE organized a Westlake “Walk About,” in which they engaged a group of community members in “creating systematic change” to make Westlake a healthy, walkable place to live and work. By walking the main commercial and transit corridors, community members assessed the streets in terms of pedestrian-friendliness. Specifically, they assessed the presence and absence of crosswalks, the potential for accidents between cars and pedestrians, and the appropriateness of curb cuts (i.e. the height of the curb).<sup>113</sup> They decided that only 56% of the intersections are safe for pedestrians, meaning 44% are unsafe for local residents.<sup>114</sup> After the walkabout, community members concluded that “creating proper crosswalks and curb cuts is the clear priority” in order to adequately serve people using wheelchairs, parents with strollers,

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<sup>111</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 3.

<sup>112</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 38.

<sup>113</sup> Jennifer Allen and Stephanie Taylor, *Westlake Walkabout: Summary Report*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Jennifer Allen and Stephanie Taylor, *Westlake Walkabout: Summary Report*, 6.

and cyclists avoiding dangerous roadways.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, many community members commented on the lack of landscaping, lighting, green space in addition to eroding sidewalks and deteriorating building facades, making Westlake “often unpleasant to walk around.”



**Pedestrians traversing Beverly Blvd without crosswalks and other pedestrian-friendly amenities** [Photo courtesy of *Westlake Walkabout: Summary Report*]



**Unsanitary and unsafe alley contributing to the poor aesthetics and pedestrian-unfriendly environment in Westlake** [Photo courtesy of *Westlake Walkabout: Summary Report*]

Westlake resident and community advocate Evelin Montes concludes that Westlake is “unique, because it is highly pedestrian-oriented, but not pedestrian-friendly.” Although Westlake contains an extremely high volume of daily pedestrian traffic, as the Westlake Walk About revealed, conditions for pedestrians are not particularly safe or aesthetically enjoyable. Since almost every intersection and boulevard is also a major thruway into downtown, Montes argues, pedestrians take a backseat to automobile traffic traversing Westlake every day. Westlake’s heavy amount of automobile traffic poses high risk to and unfavorable conditions for local pedestrians.

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<sup>115</sup> Jennifer Allen and Stephanie Taylor, *Westlake Walkabout: Summary Report*, 6.



**Westlake/MacArthur Park Metro Red Line Station**



**Congested Sidewalk along Alvarado Blvd in Westlake**

### *Metro Red Line*

Opening in January 1993, the Metro Red Line subway now connects downtown Los Angeles to North Hollywood and traverses Westlake along the Wilshire commercial corridor. The Red Line has a total of 3,361,425 monthly boardings, which accounts for nearly half of Metro rail ridership in Los Angeles County.<sup>116</sup> The Westlake/MacArthur Park station, located directly across from the park on Alvarado Street between Wilshire Boulevard and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, was the first subway stop to open outside of downtown Los Angeles<sup>117</sup> and remains to be one of the most heavily used stations with 16,00 daily boardings.<sup>118</sup> Although the Red Line “may have jumpstarted Westlake as a commercial corridor,” since Westlake now contains multiple bus lines on its major streets

<sup>116</sup> Metro, “Ridership Statistics,” February 2008, [http://www.metro.net/news\\_info/ridership\\_avg.htm#P99\\_1146](http://www.metro.net/news_info/ridership_avg.htm#P99_1146).

<sup>117</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 247.

<sup>118</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 32.



(e.g. Wilshire, Beverly and Olympic Boulevards), Evelin Montes explains that “people who live in Westlake don’t really take the Red Line” as much as they use the bus services. Since there is only one rail stop in Westlake, the Red Line is not particularly useful for local residents running errands or going to school. Consequently, the bus system plays a much larger role in the daily lives of Westlake residents than the Red Line.

### *Bicycles*

The latest document in the Westlake Community Plan update process, written by a local consulting group, Meyer, Mohaddes Associates, in January 2007 claims “there are several existing bicycle facilities” in Westlake.<sup>119</sup> However, Westlake only has one bike lane, which lasts for just 2 blocks along Hoover Street between Washington and Venice Boulevard. It contains 8 designated bike routes in which cyclists share the roads with motor vehicles. Automobile and other motor vehicle drivers generally have little respect for and often get annoyed with cyclists, not realizing that these roads are designated “bike routes.” Since Westlake’s main commercial corridors act as direct thruways to downtown, the amount of traffic and speed of vehicles creates very unsafe conditions for cyclists. Additionally, many of Westlake’s streets with bike routes are corroding and further create unfavorable cycling circumstances.

## **5.4 Community Concerns and the Westlake Community Plan Update**

As part of the Westlake Community Plan update process, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning holds community meetings to listen to local voices and community concerns regarding current living conditions, which the City will then theoretically incorporate into the community plan update. On March 3, 2008, the City held an Environmental Impact Report scoping meeting

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<sup>119</sup> Meyer, Mohaddes Associates, “Draft: Existing Conditions Report,” 11.

as part of the community plan update process at the MacArthur Park Recreation Center, a prominent community landmark in Westlake, drawing numerous and diverse residents, each with their own stories. As resident after resident stepped up to the microphone in the public comment portion of the meeting, it became clear that living conditions in Westlake are no longer acceptable. Residents are furious about the unsafe conditions for pedestrians, the substandard and ineffective sanitation services, the rapidly decreasing affordable housing options, and the lack of transit equity. The most prominent and reoccurring theme of the meeting, however, encompasses all of the above community concerns and poses the biggest threat to residents: the risk of gentrification and residential displacement.

In fact, Westlake residents have been protesting and organizing around the dissatisfactory living conditions and the threat of gentrification in Westlake for years. Local community organizations like Collective SPACE aim to improve the quality of life for Westlake residents by running campaigns that highlight the lack of affordable housing, the unsafe conditions for pedestrians (especially for children walking to school), the constant threat of crime and the need for after-school programs and accessible childcare. Another local organization, the Central City Neighborhood Partners (CCNP), consists of nonprofit community groups and public agencies and seeks to create systematic change by developing community partnerships and linking resources to provide services, strengthen economic stability and organize for social change.<sup>120</sup> As housing becomes less affordable and residential displacement increasingly threatens already existing residents, however, community members and organizations are turning to the City to address their concerns as part of community plan update process. Ultimately, many Westlake residents live in fear of being replaced if the City and private investors usher in new

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<sup>120</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 1.

development, and the community meetings held as part of the community plan update process provide a venue in which community members can express their concerns.

After living in Westlake for over 15 years, an elderly woman has recently noticed “whites moving in and Latinos moving out.” Many residents fear that future development improvements are only going to serve those currently moving into Westlake rather than already existing residents “because we are slowly in the process of being displaced and replaced.” Another resident proclaims it as “cruel and inhumane” to displace families, because they have nowhere to go and they end up being forced to leave Los Angeles. Community members also describe how displacement leads to fragmented families, and thus the rise of student dropout rates and increased involvement with drugs and other illicit activities. “Families are rooted here,” says Evelin Montes. “My family is rooted here. We want development, but we don’t want to be displaced.” Westlake residents emphasized the need to plan for the future of current Westlake residents while mitigating the risk of residential displacement through land-use policy.

As well as investing in the improvement of conditions for current Westlake community members, many argue that the City of Los Angeles should invest in pre-existing structures rather than “bulldozing our blighted buildings.” A representative from the local community organization Coalition LA says, “We’re living in inhumane living conditions. The solution is not to demolish and rebuild structures, but to improve already existing ones.” As one community member suggests, the community plan is an opportunity to develop these unoccupied buildings into affordable housing units for current Westlake residents.

“Affordable housing” in Westlake, however, is no longer affordable. Since 87.94% of Westlake housing units are renter occupied,<sup>121</sup> Los Angeles’ increasing rents and decreasing

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<sup>121</sup> Los Angeles Department of City Planning, “Local Area Profile: Population & Housing Estimates,” <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/DRU/LocL/LocPfl.cfm?geo=cp&loc=Wlk#Note1>.

availability of housing options has severely impacted Westlake residents. At March's community meeting, Evelin Montes tried to dispel the stigma surrounding affordable housing by describing that it is not about housing for poor people, but about building a sustainable and equitable community. Instead of living in "slum conditions," affordable housing increases the disposable incomes of renters, which they re-invest into the community. As Matthew Valdez at the LA Housing Partnership commented, "We need to redefine affordable housing and create incentives to build affordably by providing tax credits to developers."

In addition to Westlake's lack of affordable and healthy housing options, residents sought to address the unfriendly conditions for pedestrians. At March's public meeting, residents raised the idea of narrowing the streets and expanding green space in order to increase the walkability of Westlake. Additionally, as some community members at the meeting suggested, the City needs to mitigate the daily influx of motor vehicle traffic by designating different street types, such as creating bus only lanes, and changing zoning, which currently favors the automobile. These measures prioritize the pedestrian and thus reflect and serve the needs of the current Westlake residents.

Local residents also urged the City to address the issue of parking, which "plagues" by shifting the focus away from the pedestrian and toward automobile-oriented zoning. We don't need any more parking, more parking brings more cars," says a Coalition LA member. "Instead, we need to think about creating walkable, livable communities." By investing in a livable Westlake, as Allegra Padilla with Homies Unidos describes, "we are celebrating the diversity of the neighborhood."

### **5.5 Westlake: An Opportunity for Equity in TOD**

With Los Angeles' expanding population and housing crisis, as Los Angeles-based TOD expert Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris asserts, "we need to think about new models of development in which we build new housing near public transit...But TOD [projects] don't come together overnight, especially in the inner city." TOD requires private and public partnerships in which nonprofits have an equal voice to government agencies and developers. Loukaitou-Sideris explains that the construction of transit lines does not necessarily attract development. "And if developers do come," she adds, "it's not like they want to build affordable housing." For this reason, the public sector is in the best position to implement TOD and affordable housing by providing incentives to developers and investors. If the public sector requires a certain percentage of affordable housing, then TOD can be beneficial to inner city neighborhoods. Loukaitou-Sideris argues if the public sector requires a certain amount of affordable housing, then Westlake can continue to house its current residents, deflect gentrification and uphold its diverse cultural fabric.

James Rojas confirms that one of the greatest disadvantages and challenges to TOD in the inner city is residential displacement and gentrification. Evelin Montes agrees that although TOD is beneficial to urban communities because it spurs much-needed economic development, "TOD also spurs urban revitalization, which leads to gentrification. And this is the dilemma with TOD." For this reason, many inner city communities are often wary of TOD in their neighborhoods.

Since Westlake is located in close proximity to downtown and contains many commercial and transit corridors (specifically the Wilshire corridor), it appeals to developers and middle-class suburban residents, particularly young professionals and empty nesters, looking to migrate

back to the city. Westlake's favorable location and assets puts the community at risk of gentrification and residential displacement. In order to curb these trends, Rojas suggests that planners and developers employ strategies to mitigate the risk of gentrification, such as "[examining social activities on the streets and in the community." For instance, "building *mercados* into the [community] plan" would directly reflect the local Westlake community in the planning process. Loukaitou-Sideris claims that TOD can be very beneficial to inner city communities if they are involved in the planning process and "remain the beneficiaries once projects are complete."

In *America's Early Transit Villages*, Bernick and Cervero describe original private and public efforts to build TOD around the Westlake/MacArthur station. When the station opened in the early 1990s, Metro recruited several architecture firms to design a mixed-use TOD project around the station. Metro and various private investors hoped the project would spur the development of new shops, theaters, a police station, an outdoor plaza, and affordable housing, "promoting both economic development and public safety in the process."<sup>122</sup> Due to disputes over the level of public involvement and financial support, however, the private firms and investors abandoned the project. Bernick and Cervero argue that substantial public support was necessary to subsidize both new housing and also public transit infrastructure, including parking amenities. Since the subway was only partially built in the mid-1990s, the presence of rail had no significant impact on land value or market demand for the area surrounding the station. The failure of public support to meet private expectations, as well as the lack of community involvement, halted TOD in Westlake.

Los Angeles' current community plan process offers Westlake another chance for TOD. TOD in inner city neighborhoods, however, requires many preconditions. As Loukaitou-Sideris'

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<sup>122</sup> Michael Bernick and Robert Cervero, *Transit Villages in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 247.

2000 Delphi Survey argues, the essential components for successful TOD in the inner city include public-private partnerships, a proactive planning department, community support and financial support and commitment from local government.<sup>123</sup> Many studies, including Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee's 2000 study of Metro's Blue Line, have shown that "even in good economic times, a transit line cannot, by its mere presence, catalyze a miracle in the inner city."<sup>124</sup> The public sector, therefore, plays a vital role in the successful implementation of TOD in inner city neighborhoods. In addition to providing financial support for the offsetting of development costs in the inner city, the public sector is necessary in creating a more balanced playing field through land-use policy and subsidy programs so TOD in urban communities can compete with suburban development, which is "perceived as having lower risks and costs."<sup>125</sup> Since the Los Angeles community plan process relies on the partnership between local community members and public agencies in the crafting of local public policy, the Westlake Community Plan Update provides a timely and important vehicle for the successful implementation of TOD.

Although the Metro Red Line holds the potential to activate TOD and lead to public and private reinvestment in Westlake, the Red Line does not play as significant a role in the daily lives of residents as do its main bus lines. Since Westlake residents do not necessarily rely upon the Red Line in comparison with the bus system, the City needs to think about new models of TOD, such as developing around the main bus stops in addition to developing around the Westlake/MacArthur Park Red Line station. The September 2006 CCNP Transportation Plan argues that the intersection of Wilshire and Alvarado, which contains a Metro Rapid Bus service and local Metro and DASH bus lines in addition to the Westlake/MacArthur Park station,

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<sup>123</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 90.

<sup>124</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 91.

<sup>125</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 93.

provides an excellent opportunity for TOD. With the intersection's "steady stream of pedestrian traffic and easy access to rail and bus transit systems,"<sup>126</sup> this area contains an already existing infrastructure within which to build TOD.

The City Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and Metro recently submitted a \$40 million proposal for a mixed-use development at the Westlake/MacArthur Park station, which includes 199 affordable housing units, a 434 space parking structure and 50,400 square feet of retail space.<sup>127</sup> While this proposal provides a significant number of "affordable" housing units, the construction of a massive parking structure does not reflect community interests or reflect the need to create a more transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly Westlake. Instead, as the CCNP argues, development at the Wilshire and Alvarado intersection should aim to create a "transit village," which would direct investment toward the improvement of transit facilities as well as enhancing pedestrian linkages between bus stops, the park, shops and restaurants. TOD at the Wilshire and Alvarado intersection would also address streetscape safety and aesthetics by improving sidewalk and street paving, landscaping, street lighting, and the sanitation/comfort of transit stops.<sup>128</sup>

By implementing TOD in Westlake, the City can address community concerns regarding housing, walkability and aesthetics of the community. As an inner city neighborhood, Westlake is very suitable for TOD because it contains a highly transit-oriented infrastructure consisting of major transit corridors. Additionally, Westlake contains a very transit-dependent population, so it makes sense to provide housing near transit. However, Loukaitou-Sideris notes that it is important to remember that TOD is not the only solution to developing in the inner city; there are also possibilities for joint development projects, for instance, in which private-public

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<sup>126</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, "Central City Community Transportation Plan," 32.

<sup>127</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, "Central City Community Transportation Plan," 33.

<sup>128</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, "Central City Community Transportation Plan," 32-33.



partnerships fund in development, primarily around transit stations. Nonetheless, TOD is an effective means to address community concerns, especially in terms of housing shortages and transit equity. As Matthew Valdez suggests, “To improve the substandard living conditions in Westlake, the City needs to assess the unfriendly conditions for pedestrians and the severe shortage of housing in Westlake. We need to usher in mixed-use development, such as affordable housing units atop grocery stores. We need to do all this, and maintain the cultural fabric of this vibrant community.” TOD, as an equitable method for sustainable development, is a crucial step toward a livable, walkable Westlake.

## Chapter 6 – Policy Recommendations: An Equity Agenda for TOD

In Joe Grengs' 2002 *Journal of the American Planning Association* article discussing Los Angeles' transit equity movement, he posits, "Should transit get drivers out of their cars, or should it serve people who have few transportation alternatives?"<sup>129</sup> Likewise, should TOD provide high-rise condos and upscale shops and restaurants around rail lines to white, suburban Americans, or should it provide alternative transportation options and access to jobs, schools, grocery stores, healthcare facilities, parks and other services to low-income, nonwhite, transit-dependent urban communities? As the Westlake case study demonstrates, inner city neighborhoods provide an important opportunity to advance a TOD equity agenda, in which TOD addresses transit inequity and access issues in addition to creating sustainable, transit-oriented American cities.

Loukaitou-Sideris' 2000 Delphi Survey concludes that "while local communities and the private sector are certainly actors in the process, it is really the public sector that is asked to take the lead, set the stage, develop policies, and offer important subsidies and assistance to support the creation of TOD in the inner city."<sup>130</sup> Since the concept of a community plan encompasses participation, involvement and planning at the community level, the City of Los Angeles' New Community Plan Program (NCP) provides an optimum vehicle to drive a TOD equity agenda in the inner city. Additionally, the NCP employs place-based planning, which focuses on creating a comprehensive plan for a local community rather than addressing each component (e.g. housing, transportation, commercial development, etc.) separately. Since TOD addresses a multitude of issues, such as affordable housing, adequate transit services and access to green

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<sup>129</sup> Joe Grengs, "Community-Based Planning as a Source of Political Change: The Transit Equity Movement of Los Angeles' Bus Riders Union," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 68, no. 2 (2002): 170.

<sup>130</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey," 95.

space, the community plan is well equipped to implement TOD in the inner city. The following five elements compose a preliminary TOD equity agenda, which focuses on enhancing access to social and economic needs that are often lacking in the inner city.

*Safety, Shelter and Sanitation at Transit Stops and Stations*

Instead of resorting to the construction of new rail lines, TOD is an opportunity to preserve and enhance the already existing transit infrastructure in the urban core. Specifically, TOD can direct funding toward the creation of additional bus lines, which would address the problem of overcrowding on buses and increase the frequency and efficiency of buses in and around the inner city. Investing in inner city bus services also has the potential to halt increasing fares that disproportionately burden low-income transit users. Furthermore, since inner city residents rely on public transit to get to jobs and school as well as run daily errands, it is imperative to maintain safe and sanitary transit stops and facilities. As the Westlake case study demonstrates, dirty and unsafe bus stops burden inner city residents who use transit on a daily basis. Since most of the transit infrastructure in the inner city evolves around bus systems, providing benches, shelters and adequate lighting at bus stops allows riders to feel comfortable and safe while traveling through their own neighborhoods. Enhancing already existing transit infrastructures in the inner city, rather than investing in new suburban rail, is a comparatively low-cost strategy that increases the mobility of low-income communities in the inner city, a primary facet of a TOD equity agenda.

As the 2006 CCNP Transportation Plan mentions, the improvement and maintenance of transit stops is very complex and bureaucratic. In Los Angeles, five separate government entities are responsible for bus stop maintenance alone. Specifically, the bus sign, benches, shelters, trash

receptacles, and lighting are each operated by Metro, Norman Bus Bench/Bureau of Street Services, CBS/Decaux Outdoor Media, the Bureau of Street Services and the Bureau of Street Lighting, respectively.<sup>131</sup> Clearly, the separation of responsibilities makes it nearly impossible to adequately serve bus patrons, thus the consolidation of these duties would greatly improve sanitation and maintenance of bus stops.

### *Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Measures*

Affordable housing is a central component to addressing social and economic inequity in the inner city. Since inner city residents are the predominant users of public transit, it is fitting to build affordable housing for low-income residents in proximity to transit and other services. As Loukaitou-Sideris stresses, housing developers target areas that contain social and economic amenities, such as good schools, less crime and access to transit options. In addition to the actual safety of the neighborhood, as one panelist in the 2000 Delphi Survey mentions, “perception of safety also matters”<sup>132</sup> in the housing decisions of both developers and renters. Since TOD is a comprehensive strategy for sustainable growth that includes the creation of public spaces and the improvement of neighborhood aesthetics in order to raise the quality of life for the surrounding community, TOD can create an environment that attracts developers to urban neighborhoods.

In the Westlake case study, however, residents repeatedly expressed fear of displacement and a loss of affordable housing in their urban community with the onset of much-needed public and private development and investment. TOD can address this dilemma by spearheading adaptive reuse initiatives that transform the inner city’s multitude of underutilized or vacant buildings along commercial and transit corridors into affordable housing units for local residents

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<sup>131</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, “Central City Community Transportation Plan,” 38.

<sup>132</sup> Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, “Transit-Oriented Development in the Inner City: A Delphi Survey,” 93.

dependent on public transit. Additionally, community plan updates for Los Angeles' inner city neighborhoods can mitigate the risk of gentrification by implementing inclusionary zoning to raise the in-lieu fee and/or require on-site construction of affordable housing for developers.

### *Pedestrian-friendly Design and Zoning*

TOD in both suburban and urban environments aims to create walkable communities. In its analysis of the relationship between TOD and the pedestrian, *The New Transit Town* suggests, "If transit is inserted into a healthy pedestrian environment, then pedestrians can easily become transit riders."<sup>133</sup> The authors further argue that pedestrians will only become transit users if the area has some density and interconnected streets. Inner city neighborhoods, however, already contain high density, connected transit corridors and, most importantly, pedestrians who use and often depend on transit. TOD in the inner city, therefore, does not need to focus on "inserting transit" into the neighborhood, but rather on creating pedestrian-friendly conditions, such as cleaning up sidewalks and supplementing streetscapes with landscaping, in addition to enhancing the already existing transit infrastructure.

In spite of the inner city's relatively high level of foot traffic, conditions for pedestrians are often dismal and unsatisfactory due to busy roadways, a lack of sidewalk maintenance and scarce landscaping along streetscapes. Since automobile traffic is mainly generated by non-local commuters traveling through the urban core rather than by local residents of the inner city, limiting automobile-oriented zoning, such as wide streets and high speed limits, directly benefits inner city residents. In addition to the predominance of motor vehicle traffic, the lack of aesthetics and green space along urban streetscapes result in unpleasant conditions for pedestrians.

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<sup>133</sup> Hank Dittmar and Shelley Poticha, "Defining Transit-Oriented Development: The New Building Block," 29-30.

In response to the unfriendly conditions for pedestrians in Los Angeles' inner city communities, the 2006 CCNP Transportation Plan proposes a "pedestrian program," which emphasizes street and sidewalk lighting and pedestrian-friendly intersection design (i.e. sufficient crosswalks and pedestrian-oriented traffic signals) as an integral part of creating safe, secure, walkable communities.<sup>134</sup> TOD provides a comprehensive plan, including design guidelines to address aesthetics of storefronts and landscaping of streetscapes, which vastly improves conditions for pedestrians. The community plan update process presents an opportunity to directly write TOD and pedestrian-friendly design into the planning guidelines for Los Angeles' inner city communities.

#### *Investment in Local Businesses and Mixed-Use Projects*

In addition to the risk of gentrification, critics often claim that TOD overrides local businesses by attracting upscale shops and corporate chains, which undermine neighborhood businesses and dismantle the unique character of the surrounding community. TOD, however, can support local businesses and encourage local economic development by establishing dense, mixed-use projects that connect local businesses to housing and transit. Just as TOD can work within the inner city's already existing transit infrastructure rather than building entirely new rail lines, TOD can develop around and for the benefit of local businesses rather than ushering in outside economic interests. In the Westlake case study, for instance, local street vendors selling a variety of goods and food use the sidewalks and often contribute to congested pedestrian traffic. Rather than develop along Westlake's commercial corridors and eliminate street vendors entirely, TOD projects can incorporate a public plaza or similar type of open space into its mixed-use

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<sup>134</sup> Central City Neighborhood Partners, "Central City Community Transportation Plan," 33-34.

development plan, specifically for the purpose of creating space for the vendors that remains within the community but out of the way of pedestrian traffic.

In order to preserve the uniqueness of the local community, TOD in the inner city and community plans needs to target local businesses, merchants and vendors rather than cater to outside business incentives. Additionally, by making local storefronts aesthetically appealing through mixed-use development, TOD enhances the walkability of the neighborhood and benefits local residents while preserving the character of the community.

#### *Reduction of Parking Requirements and Maintenance of Green Space & Public Parks*

Parking requirements, which require developers to provide a certain number of parking spaces per retail or residential unit, often deter developers from initiating TOD in the inner city. Many inner city residents agree that parking requirements are too high for urban areas that are already rich with transportation options. Since many inner city residents do not even use a car as their primary mode of transportation, as one inner city resident suggested in the Westlake case study, the City of Los Angeles needs to “phase out” surface parking on the street level. Instead of requiring the construction of parking lots and structures to accompany the development of housing and commercial amenities, the City needs to enhance the transit infrastructure to adequately reflect the needs and lifestyles of inner city residents and contribute to the sustainability of urban neighborhoods.

The reduction of parking requirements also provides more available land for public parks and green space in urban communities. Open space and landscaping improves the aesthetics of the surrounding built and natural environments and raises the pedestrian experience in the inner city. Since there is often a lack of open space in dense inner city neighborhoods, TOD can place

parks in proximity to housing and transit, creating accessible green space for urban residents and families.

In addition to the above components, a TOD equity agenda can also include efforts to increase access to food retail, establish public art projects and create community gardens. Since there is a general lack of adequate grocery stores in the inner city, TOD can incorporate supermarkets and grocery stores into mixed-use projects. Additionally, public art projects, which invite local artists to embark on projects in the community, and the establishment of community gardens increases aesthetics of the neighborhood, encourages community involvement, and creates a self-sustaining community as well as provides another food resource to local residents.

## **Conclusion**

As Vancouver-based urban planner Gordon Price observes, Los Angeles is inherently transit-oriented. Los Angeles' urban neighborhoods contain the density, the transit infrastructure and the foot traffic to usher in successful transit-oriented development in its urban areas. In addition to TOD's ability to create sustainable communities by orienting Americans away from their cars and lessening the adverse effects automobile-oriented development, the above TOD equity agenda outlines a way that planners, developers and communities can begin to address deeply rooted transit inequity and economic isolation in the inner city.

TOD in the inner city, however, poses an undeniable dilemma: how do cities stimulate economic and residential development while concurrently mitigating the risk of gentrification and residential displacement? As Peter Calthorpe describes in his foreword to Dittmar and Ohland's *The New Transit Town*, "The greatest challenge for inner-city TOD is to balance the



need for affordable housing with the need to diversify the city into economically integrated communities.”<sup>135</sup> Cities cannot halt middle-class migration back to the urban core, nor do they wish to, but through community involvement in planning processes, municipalities can incorporate the voices of already existing residents into the planning strategies for the future growth for their neighborhoods. If planners frame TOD as a means to remedy inequities in the inner city rather than a means to serve a renewed middle-class affinity for urban rail, then the TOD movement will be able to develop and utilize an equity agenda in the inner city. By assessing and addressing the current conditions in Los Angeles’ inner city neighborhoods, particularly in Westlake, including access to transit, affordable housing, jobs, schools, parks and services, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning can establish and execute an equity agenda in its low-income, transit-dependent community plan areas.

Although TOD is certainly not the only model for sustainable and equitable growth, it contributes to the increasingly necessary strategies to combat the adverse effects of automobile-oriented, suburban development. As Calthorpe explains, “It is an alternative that provides choice not only in transportation modes but also, more fundamentally, in lifestyle.”<sup>136</sup> TOD aims to reconnect inherently interrelated elements of peoples’ daily lives, such as housing, jobs and transit, which the automobile and suburban sprawl seek to dismantle. Through public initiative and community involvement, TOD can become an integral part of the equitable and sustainable growth of urban America.

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<sup>135</sup> Peter Calthorpe, Foreword to *The New Transit Town*, xii.

<sup>136</sup> Peter Calthorpe, Foreword to *The New Transit Town*, xii.

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## Appendix A – Los Angeles Community Plan Areas

<b>Community Plan Area</b>	<b>Date of Last Update</b>
Arleta - Pacoima	November 6, 1996
Bel Air - Beverly Crest	November 6, 1996
<b>Boyle Heights</b>	<b>November 10, 1998</b>
Brentwood - Pacific Palisades	June 17, 1998
Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills-West Hills	August 17, 1999
<b>Central City</b>	<b>April 21, 2005</b>
Central City North	December 15, 200
Chatsworth - Porter Ranch	September 4, 1993
Encino - Tarzana	December 16, 1998
<b>Granada Hills-Knollwood</b>	<b>July 10, 1996</b>
Harbor Gateway	December 6, 1995
<b>Hollywood</b>	<b>December 18, 1988</b>
Los Angeles World Airport (LAX)	December 14, 2005
Mission Hills - Panorama City - North Hills	June 9, 1999
North Hollywood - Valley Village	May 14, 1996
Northeast Los Angeles	June 15, 1999
Northridge	February 24, 1998
Palms - Mar Vista - Del Rey	September 16, 1997
Port of Los Angeles	Not Available
Reseda - West Van Nuys	November 17, 1999
<b>San Pedro</b>	<b>March 17, 1999</b>
Sherman Oaks - Studio City - Toluca Lake - Cahuenga Pass	May 13, 1998
Silver Lake - Echo Park - Elysian Valley	August 11, 2004
<b>South Los Angeles</b>	<b>March 22, 2000</b>
<b>Southeast Los Angeles</b>	<b>March 22, 2000</b>
Sun Valley - La Tuna Canyon	August 13, 1999
<b>Sunland - Tujunga - Shadow Hills - Lake View Terrace - East La Tuna Canyon</b>	<b>November 18, 1997</b>
<b>Sylmar</b>	<b>August 8, 1997</b>
Van Nuys - North Sherman Oaks	September 9, 1998
Venice	September 29, 2000
<b>West Adams - Baldwin Hills - Leimert</b>	<b>May 6, 1998</b>
<b>West Los Angeles</b>	<b>July 27, 1999</b>
Westchester - Playa Del Rey	April 13, 2004
<b>Westlake</b>	<b>September 16, 1997</b>
Westwood	July 27, 1999
Wilmington - Harbor City	July 14, 1999
Wilshire	September 19, 2001

\***Bolded** Community Plan Areas are currently being updated



## Appendix C – Comprehensive List of Primary Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, how transit-oriented is Los Angeles?
2. How do you define transit-oriented development (TOD)? What are the benefits of TOD? What are the disadvantages of TOD?
3. One of most interested debates that I've come across in my research surrounds the purpose of TOD – is it about getting people out of their cars? Or is it about increasing transit opportunities to low-income, non-automobile users?
4. What do you see as the key factors in creating a “livable” Los Angeles?
5. How has TOD been integrated into the Los Angeles community plans in the past? How is TOD being considered in the current community plan update process?
6. What do Westlake community advocates and community members consider as the key factors in creating a livable community? What issues are most focused on when talking about creating a livable community? How significant are transit equity issues perceived by community groups?
7. What are the benefits and disadvantages of TOD, especially in an inner city neighborhood such as Westlake? What are the biggest barriers to TOD in the inner city?
8. How has the Westlake/MacArthur Park Red Line station affected the Westlake community in terms of economic growth? In terms of available, affordable housing? In terms of demographic changes?
9. Who rides the Red Line?
10. How has transit-oriented development been incorporated into the current Westlake Community Plan? How is TOD being considered in the Westlake Community Plan update process?
11. What key factors would a TOD equity agenda consist of?
12. How can we use the community plan process to implement a TOD equity agenda in Los Angeles?