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"Los Angeles Is Not the City It Could Have Been"

How could a minor civic ordinance like a business-hours ban on downtown parking have such a dramatic effect on the future of a growing metropolis? The answer has roots that fan out far beyond the hundred square blocks of downtown Los Angeles and extend much deeper than those few weeks in 1920. Indeed, in retrospect it is clear that the parking ban was merely a sign heralding a series of transformations that shaped the city Los Angeles would become in the twentieth century. Furthermore, it is clear that the failure of the parking restrictions was but a shadow of a far more profound failure of urban vision and planning, for Los Angeles by 1940 was not the kind of city it was intended to be.

Several prominent urban historians have suggested over the last fifteen years that Los Angeles was, in fact, largely unplanned. David Gebhard and Harriette von Breton, Martin Wachs, Mark Foster, Scott Bottles, and Robert Fogelson all essentially agree that city planners failed to make much of a difference in the transformation of the city during what all say was a critical period in the city's formation.[1] As Fogelson puts it in his landmark 1967 study, *Fragmented Metropolis,* "The planners succeeded only where their goals corresponded with those of the developers, and planning, instead of guiding private development, merely sanctioned it."[2] Greg Hise takes to heart this assessment to such a degree that he devotes the extensive research in his *Magnetic Los Angeles* for the most part not to a study of official city planners but to private subdividers—whom he refers to as "community builders."[3] These were the people doing real planning work, in Hise's view.[4] Similarly, architectural historians David Gebhard and Harriette von Breton lament that, in the period between the establishment of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission in 1920 and the beginning of World War II in late 1941, city and county planners were largely fix-

ated on a losing battle with congestion. Summing up the state of the city's urban planning in the years before the Second World War in *Los Angeles in the Thirties,* Gebhard and von Breton conclude that "a careful reading of the published histories of planning and the planning profession in L.A. gives the distinct impression that the task of the planner was to bureaucratize and codify that which existed. Only in the planning and design of freeways . . . did the work of the planners run neck and neck with that of the real world."[5] Planners, in this view, far from being dreamers, were fundamentally conservative even when they were able to attend to anything aside from traffic.

This grim assessment is curiously mirrored by the writings of Los Angeles's planners themselves at the end of this period. Writing in 1941, Charles Clark, who was at the time the chief land planning consultant for the Federal Housing Administration for the western states and territories, as well as being a long-time Los Angeles planner, declared that it was not planners but private "subdividers [who] are largely responsible for the pattern of present day Los Angeles."[6] The outcome of this chaotic lack of central planning was, in his considered opinion, dire. Under the heading "Planning Deficiencies," Clark produced a serious indictment of a city he saw as rotten at its core: "Los Angeles would not like to be called a 'bad apple,' yet this term is suitable. The healthy skin of an apple may conceal decay."[7] All this was due to a lack of professional planning: "The unplanned and uncontrolled subdivision of land can and has blocked traffic circulation, created slums through land crowding, and has caused terrific assessment burdens through necessary condemnation for rights-of-way which should have been considered in subdivision design."[8] The consensus of Los Angeles's planners on the eve of the Second World War is probably best summed up by L. Demming Tilton in his chapter of *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan* titled simply "Planning":

> The city-dweller steels himself with difficulty against the various types of irritations encountered in a badly organized urban area. He suffers from the noise and fumes of heavy traffic, the friction and conflicts of congested dwellings and residential areas. He views with shame the profuse and garish displays of commercialism, the unkempt vacant land along main arteries, the sordid slums. He misses the positive values in convenient, soothing rest spots, in spacious tree-bordered plazas, inspiring vistas, wide, well-planned scenic drives, impressive architectural compositions. Los Angeles is not the city it could have been, because no agency was responsible in its earlier days for the production of the plans and specifications from which a truly great metropolitan center could have been built.[9]

This failure echoes through commentary about Southern California. Dan Fowler, writing in *Look* fifteen years later, surmised regretfully that "Los Angeles could have been one of the beautiful cities of the world. It pioneered in planning for good living. The fact that it is no longer the beautiful city it was can be blamed partly on the fly-by-night developer and what he did to planning and zoning laws."[10]

DREAMS AND VISIONS

If it is true that city planning in Los Angeles was a failure, it was not in fact for lack of commitment by official city planners. Long before the parking ban, Los Angeles was a city taken with the idea of planning for tomorrow. As a city deeply invested in its own future, boosterish Los Angeles was, particularly in the first decades of the century, engrossed in envisioning itself as a great western metropolis to rival—and eventually replace—San Francisco.

Sometimes it seems, as Kevin Starr paints in his reverential multivolume history of California, the city is itself hardly more than a hopeful dream. It is a series of possibilities or, rather, the very spirit of possibility. For Starr, Los Angeles is less a place than a muse. Somewhat more critically, Mike Davis begins *City of Quartz* by exploring some of the more dreamy utopian possibilities of Southern California, ranging from the socialist high desert commune of Llano del Rio to the vanished hopes of corporate paternalism in working-class Fontana. For Davis, Los Angeles has always been a battleground between divergent utopias, from lush Mediterranean Progressive Era paradise to proving ground for a hostile and paranoid future corporate metropolis bitterly divided along lines of race and class. These potential envisioned cities ultimately partake of this grand tradition of Los Angeles futurism, its ideology and architecture echoing endlessly between competing "sunshine" boosterism and critical "noir" discourses. Like Starr's *Inventing the Dream, Material Dreams,* and *Endangered Dreams, City of Quartz* is engaged in, as its subtitle proclaims, "Excavating the Future in Los Angeles." Whether lost futures of social justice or enduring dreams of material prosperity and individual freedom, these histories have contributed to the long discourse of envisioning possible tomorrows through the lens of Los Angeles.[11]

In the first decades of the century, attempts to prepare for the future led Los Angeles's city leaders to pay careful attention to planning the city. As early as 1907, booster and social worker Dana Bartlett pictured Southern California as "the better city" (in his book of that title), arguing that "this City of the Angeles can be among the first to realize the world's dream of the City Beautiful."[12] Bartlett had early on called for "a comprehensive plan of beautifying buildings covering not only the present city, but reaching far out into the suburbs."[13] This plan would ideally be formulated by members of "a new profession—that of the city architect, beauty expert, or civic decorator—a profession so unique that the title has not yet become fixed."[14]

Soon thereafter, Charles Mulford Robinson more formally answered the call, bringing a new discipline—now called "city planning"—to Southern California with a potential master plan for Los Angeles.[15] His envisioned future was consistent with long-cherished local notions of the region's destiny. He saw the city as a Mediterranean paradise. Projecting into the future the synthetic past the region's boosters

had been promoting for years, Robinson's city would revel in its spread-out shape, with wide boulevards, abundant sunlight, and plentiful parks and open space to better present "the natural splendor of the city's environs."[16] The formal report, titled simply *Los Angeles, California: The City Beautiful,* emphasized the opportunities of the city's topography and climate, not just as a natural amenity but as a matter of practical business. His suggested improvements, Robinson reminded boosterish Angelenos, were intended to ensure "that tourists will not pass through Los Angeles. They will stay here, in a real 'Paris of America'—a summer city, when the East is swept by wind and snow; and they will find a gay outdoor life where other cities are stamped with the grime and rush or an earnestness that knows not how to play."[17] Careful planning could demonstrate to the world that Los Angeles was a city in harmony with its surroundings, fully delivering on its booster promises.

What might seem a bit odd about this "city beautiful" plan in this context, though, is its continual emphasis on road improvements over more obvious amenities. After routine discussions of a proposed unified railroad terminal and a new civic center (standard features of city plans of the era),[18] the remainder of the Robinson report chiefly discusses an elaborate boulevard system for the metropolis. In fact, this is the element of the report that has received the most praise from historians. Indeed, as Mansel Blackford describes it in *The Lost Dream,* in Robinson's plan "boulevards would spread out to connect parks as 'links in the chain' throughout Los Angeles."[19] In Robinson's Haussmannesque plan, grand boulevards would be stately monuments in their own right, serving by their peripheral plantings (about which Robinson's report has a great deal to say) and their demarcated terminal points to clarify and order the metropolitan fabric, as well as a real tool to knit together the already overgrown city.[20] As a consequence of this forward-thinking planning, Southern California would be "one city from the mountains to the sea," in the oft-quoted words of one nineteenth-century Californio rancher[21]—a city beautiful on a grand regional scale.

How, though, could a system of boulevards lead visitors and natives alike to the "outdoor life" of the region? One clear answer is that these roads would link the city's existing parks and open spaces, rendering them accessible to all. Yet it is critical to remember that, even in Southern California, most people still did not have access to automobiles in 1907. The call for public pleasure boulevards, then, was no populist plea. In fact, many times Robinson's boulevards directly conflict with the ordinary needs of the masses of Angelenos: "In Los Angeles, there is now no boulevard system whatever, and in attempting to create one there is the almost constant obstacle of a double car track on every street of considerable breadth and easy grade."[22] The city's primary transportation infrastructure, with its common streetcars and interurbans, remains little but a disfigurement in this city beautiful scheme. No, this is a plan directed to appeal to a narrow urban elite, and it is a nostalgic ap-

peal at that. These boulevards are envisioned in Robinson's plan as surrey trails, seldom wider than fifty feet,[23] intended as public spaces but hardly accessible to the majority of Angelenos. Instead, the city's high society could take pleasure, under Robinson's proposed improvements, in pleasure drives—either by horse carriage or (for the more adventurous) by horseless carriage—between downtown and ritzy Pasadena, and in sunny afternoons spent observing stately street traffic: "As it [the proposed renovated Figueroa Street] would carry a ceaseless stream of carriage travel, it would necessarily become a show drive, and I would have seats at intervals along the wide side parking, in furtherance of the purpose to facilitate the city's outdoor life."[24] This phase of city planning was an elite pastime, a civic improvement that paired aesthetics with real estate values, open space with courtly leisure, and public sites with the civic pride of a prosperous commercial class.

Robinson's plan was also somewhat grandiose; it was ambitious and expensive. Although it was generally viewed positively, city leaders were not prepared to commit in 1907 to a single comprehensive future vision—even one that promised to make Los Angeles the "Paris of America." Consequently, Robinson's plan never resulted in action.[25] It remained significant, however, as part of an ongoing discourse about the proper way to plan the metropolis of the future, and elements of it found their way into many later plans for the city. Robinson's vision of a city that aimed "not to be simply big; but to be beautiful as well" echoed, although in different terms, Bartlett's call for Los Angeles to become not just a bigger but a better, more moral and godly city.[26] But whether interested in moral uplift or civic pride, these influential early proponents of planning did not succeed in their stated goal of putting planning at the heart of local decision making.

The institutionalization of city planning in Los Angeles came from quite another quarter. In April 1914, a full five years after the publication of Robinson's plan, a number of Progressive civic organizations—including, notably, the publishers of the left-leaning local Progressive newspaper, *The California Outlook*—arranged to import from New York an elaborate city planning exhibit. The purpose of this display was to impress upon Angelenos the practical importance of planning for all citizens. As the director of the exhibit put it in an article in the *Outlook,* "The city planning exhibition is not a merely technical presentation of the problems relating to city building. It is an intensely human proposition, it is an aid toward the making over of a city for the people, to give them a better as well as more economic place in which to live and work and play. City planning is not a device merely to beautify. It is not for the rich. . . . City planning is for the average man and we must build our city for the average man."[27]

Given these populist associations of this sort of central planning, it should come as no surprise that "Gordon Whitnall, a young and articulate secretary of the local Socialist Party, assisted in setting up the exhibit" (see figure 3).[28] This exhibit proved quite influential among ordinary Angelenos, as well as city officials. Equally im-

[Figure 3 here]

FIGURE 3. Los Angeles planning director Gordon Whitnall, 1930.
From Board of City Planning Commissioners, *Annual Report* (Los
Angeles: Board of City Planning Commissioners, 1930).

portant for the development of the city planning profession in Southern California, though, was Whitnall's more practical political contributions. As Robert Lee Williams, who interviewed Whitnall before his death, recounts in "The City Planning Movement in Los Angeles, 1900–1920," "Whitnall had come to the Southland from the city of Milwaukee where he had been active in the reform politics of the Social Democratic Party."[29] After arriving in Southern California in 1910, he continued his radical political work by assisting in the election of Socialist candidate Fredrick C. Wheeler to the Los Angeles City Council in 1913. As Socialist Party

secretary, Whitnall had drafted a platform upon which Wheeler was obligated by his party bylaws to legislate if elected. The primary plank of that platform was a call for a formal, professionalized city planning commission. In April 1914, shortly after the planning exhibit was installed at the Bronson Building in downtown Los Angeles, Wheeler dutifully submitted to the council Whitnall's formal resolution for the establishment of a city planning commission. Although the resolution did not pass the city council at this time, Whitnall used the publicity generated by the deliberations, as well as the enthusiasm surrounding the planning exhibit, to call for a public meeting, which culminated in the formation of a quasi-official City Planning Association, with Whitnall as its executive-secretary.[30]

This body was the first formal city planning agency for Los Angeles. Over the course of the 1910s, the association gathered together many of the men who would later serve as professional planners in Southern California, including Whitnall, George Damon, and Hugh Pomeroy, among several others. As they came to share a common language of city planning—they were initially drawn from a diverse array of professions—they began to consider themselves professionals in the new field of expert city planning. During this period, these planners consolidated many of the notions of a future metropolis—some of which were quite radical—that would preoccupy planning discourse throughout the subsequent decade.

After a six-year delay, part of which was attributable to the war, the city council formally recognized the status of this long-coalescing local planning community in April 1920 by establishing an official City Planning Commission, with Whitnall as its head. With its new status, this commission at once set itself as the center of future utopian envisioning for the city; along with its offshoot, the County Regional Planning Commission, the new city agency would assume the mantle of planning the metropolis over the following decades. It would operate "as a coordinating medium thru which all agencies . . . which contribute to the physical development of the community shall be focused in a single attack upon the task of building the city of tomorrow."[31] As Gordon Whitnall, the city's chief planner and chairman of the commission, put it to the city council in July 1920, "Right from the start, we must understand that we are not the conservative branch of City Government. We are the ones who should 'Dream dreams and see Visions'—visions of the better City to be."[32]

THE CITY ENVISIONED

Whitnall's statement was significant. It indicated that city planners would henceforth claim authority over and formal sanction for imagining Los Angeles's future—a claim that would not go entirely uncontested. The City Planning Commission would have an official monopoly on envisioning the shape that the city of the future would take. Whitnall put it bluntly a few years after the establishment of the

commission: "Weary with educating successive political administrations, we went with our message to the schools, the women's clubs, the civic bodies and commercial organizations, until today there is not a man in the city council, and there is not a future city council which will oppose the work of the city plan commission."[33] This sort of hubris was generally consistent with the norms of the profession of city planning in the era. As a new discipline struggling for legitimacy, city planning had to continually redefine and reiterate its mandate and its domain of action. Planners sought to both establish their authorship rights to and actually manipulate the city by means of a particular methodology. As a consequence, the ends and the means of the new science of city planning were intertwined. Whitnall's claim to authority over the city's utopian destiny—"the better city to be"[34]—was based firmly on the planner's ability to see: to "Dream dreams and see Visions." The visionary planner would both prophesy the future of the city and acutely observe the present condition of the metropolis. This supposedly unique ability to see the city in its entirety, as a whole, and to thus better forecast its future development, was the main scientific claim of the new profession of city planning.

Whereas previous generations of planners and moral reformers—mostly amateurs and often middle-class women, quasi-aristocratic male dilettantes like Charles Mulford Robinson, or, like Dana Bartlett, clergymen—had sought to upgrade the urban social environment to improve the city's residents, the men of the new professional discipline of city planning were concerned with the city itself. The earlier reformers had seen the city largely as a collection of human environments that mirrored social relationships and fostered individuals' moral character: "So, the improvers believed, the essence of every social problem was part of the fabric of the city and embodied within it; all varieties of social, physical, and spiritual disorders—crime, saloons, decline of the birthrate, physical fatigue, a steady deterioration of mind and body—developed out of the chaos and physical disarray of the urban form. This disorder was a "contaminating poison," recruiting members of the lowest grade of humanity."[35] Moral reformers would only effect urban change as a means of affecting urban residents. Their ultimate aim was to improve the citizens. Consequently, in the view of the new professional planners, this earlier generation of reformers offered piecemeal solutions and partial, situational remedies. Their direct architectural and personal interventions were not addressed to the structural problems of the city taken as a whole.

In contrast, as M. Christine Boyer argues in *Dreaming the Rational City,* the profession of city planning was largely unconcerned with moral uplift or with individual human beings and their immediate environments. City planning took the total city as its object of knowledge and sought to turn that knowledge into a set of precise techniques for manipulating the city in accordance with "an ideal: the city as a perfectly disciplined spatial order."[36] Specifically, these planners saw the city as a coherent, self-contained, autonomous system—a network of functions, processes,

and flows that operated according to an identifiable logical order. In this view, the city was primarily something organic. It was no longer a place or a collection of environments; it was an entity in its own right. It therefore followed that the job of the planner was twofold: first, to properly observe the city as a whole, and second, to correct any disruptions in the proper functioning of this organism. Here, the city planner operated in a manner analogous to a doctor, first diagnosing the patient, and then directly intervening in his or her body. In claiming the city as a discrete and autonomous domain of professional scientific expertise, city planners were both establishing authority over their object of study, after the manner of so many other movements for professional disciplinary control during the era of Progressivism, and legitimating their precise disciplinary methodology. Consequently, as Boyer notes, city planning staked its professional stature on a fundamental reorientation of the meaning of the city. In less than twenty years, between the 1890s and 1910s, the entire language of urban observation had changed: "Between the terms *instinct, upliftance, harmony* and those of *organic unity, expert, control,* a radical realignment of discourse had occurred."[37]

In dealing with the urban organism, the planners' goals were simple; they followed inevitably from the chosen metaphor. They would be primarily concerned with the readily identifiable organic processes of their patient: flows and circulation, respiration and congestion, "cancers" and "blight," growth and "development." Those specific urban forms that could be easily identified and diagnosed through the focused lens of this organic metaphor would now be subject to the attentions of urban planning and redevelopment. This discourse did not merely direct the planners' clinical gaze; it compelled these planners to view any urban forms inconsistent with the imaginary ideal of the "healthy" body as necessarily problematic. The organic metaphor led planners to see certain urban forms as *by definition* unhealthy for the urban patient.[38] Ethically, the organic metaphor compelled the planner to take action, to accept the responsibility and treat the patient. The stakes were high: if proper action was not swiftly taken, the patient's condition would likely deteriorate to a critical point. Eventually, the patient could die. Radical surgery upon the body of the city was not only preferable, therefore, but necessary. To do otherwise would be to risk utter planning malpractice. Large-scale, drastic solutions—urban surgery—would henceforth be within the mandate of the planner.

Of course, such drastic measures would not always be necessary. Furthermore, in the 1910s and most of the 1920s, the new profession of city planning lacked the power to perform such radical surgery. Consequently, planners hoped to correct problems before they turned life-threatening. Preventive medicine would be more consistent with planners' claims to be able to not only treat urban problems but to predict—and thus work to forestall—future crises. Indeed, central to the critical planning project of seeing the city as a whole was an overriding concern with diagnostics and proper observation. Planners sought above all to make the city com-

prehensible—to subject the urban organism to careful and precise analysis. Legibility was the profession's first principle. As a result, the planner began treating the urban body by making a precise diagnosis. The planner had to observe his object of study in minute detail and comprehensively. The microscopic concern with the city's myriad cellular structures had to be tempered, always, with the macroscopic mission to view the city as an organic unity. "The act of city planning required a new totalization: a network of special investigations penetrating the conditions" of the urban body.[39] To this end, city planners devised critical technologies that allowed them to speculate with greater precision on their urban patients. These tools determined how planners would make sense of the city.

Planners created observational "machinery [that] would . . . give rise to a body of detailed knowledge about the city and a set of ideal urban observatories that would constantly survey and correct its form."[40] To derive this knowledge and to properly position future probes, planners required systematic urban data. Consequently, chief among these new technologies of observation was the professional urban survey. The survey would be both minute and comprehensive. It would divide the city into comprehensible bits, while deriving extensive information about the relations between these elements. By digesting the organic whole of the city, the discipline of planning would in turn discipline the city itself:

> Above all else disciplinary space is cellular; its purpose is to be able to separate or break up confusing overlaps, to fix peripatetic land uses, to set up more useful communications among the parts of the city. This first operation required a survey that organized a multitude of activities and distributed them into cellular spaces. . . . In turn the surface of the city was carved up into a series of distinct entities: an exhaustive survey of all the visible aspects of squares, parks, buildings, sewers, conduit pipes, poles and wires, railways, streets, waterways, reservoirs—in short, every piece of land, building, and improvement, both public and private.[41]

The city planner would use the survey to track and locate each cell in the larger organism. Furthermore, the planner would then be able to sort the elements into comprehensible reductionist categories (e.g., multifamily residence, small commercial installation, city park, and so on). Thus, planners could produce a detailed tabulated urban index—a typology of an urban topography, bringing the endless detail under some measure of conceptual order.[42] Through the survey, the city was transformed from organic undifferentiated mass into component parts. The specific objects that planners could quantify became, collectively, the basic elements of an urban environment. All else was irrelevant and was effectively rendered invisible. Further, everything observable in a city could, by definition, potentially be controlled and regulated by planners. The survey thus combined the appearance of omniscience with that of omnipotence.

These surveys were important diagnostic tools, but they effected an epistemic

splintering of the city if taken on their own. Although the survey unified the urban landscape through its classifying categorization, in raw form it reduced the city to a series of isolated and, as it were, disembodied tabulations. The city appeared in the survey as an abstract series of quantitative data, figures that did not fully convey or represent the dense fabric of neighborhoods, communities, spatial proximities, cultural patterns, and the like. The task of reconciling this fragmented urban diagnosis with the dreamed and envisioned ideal, unified, organic city required something beyond the diagnostic survey. Consequently, the survey was matched with another critical technology of urban observation in the planners' toolbox: the comprehensive plan and map. After observing the city in detail and thereby diagnosing its ills and weaknesses, the planner once more drew back to view the city as a whole. After compiling the intricate data, planners then reassembled the survey data into a unifying representation of the city. As Boyer puts it, "All of these data that survey the life, labor, and leisure conditions of the people . . . must be territorially represented through a city plan."[43] This survey data must be transferred to a spatial representation to provide a visual picture of the urban organism: "This vast array of information should be displayed upon a series of maps: maps of the location and distribution of foreign quarters, residential areas, workers' neighborhoods; maps pinpointing the location of churches, saloons, schools, vice resorts, red-light districts; maps depicting the congested areas; the location of proposed new street systems; historical maps describing past growth patterns—maps, in short, that established the relationship of each parcel of land to another and then to the whole."[44] In this way, by way of precise scientific surveys, the city is gradually abstracted and transformed into a map, a rational cartography that can then be manipulated as a whole rather than an array of unique places and neighborhoods.

These maps would show all the impurities in the urban organism in relation to the city's vital organs and major arteries. Any malformed structures, inappropriate land use, or other unhealthy urban forms that impeded the proper operation of the urban body would clearly emerge from these diagnostic images. Such blights would stick out like a sore thumb. Consequently, these maps would, as products of the planners' organicist discourse, positively isolate problematic areas that might at some point require treatment. These surveyed and mapped forms that manifestly "were out of place" or "did not belong" thus declared their own excision. So it was that planners produced corresponding series of new, predictive maps representing the envisioned appearance of the future city after being corrected and purified by professionals. Here the planner could produce an imaginary postoperative, "virtual" city at the same level of precision and detail as their depictions of the existing flawed metropolis. Planning experts would not only foretell the future of the city, they would depict it graphically, vividly. Utopia and diagnostic would intertwine, lending the credibility of the scientific survey to the planners' comprehensive plans and an aura of prophecy to the survey (as the "before" picture juxtaposed to the ideal

"after" picture). Both representations, in their mutual reinforcement, would manifest the apparent solidity and authority of precise representation. The original diagnostic and new ideal maps could thus be easily compared, and in the juxtaposition, the promise of the planners' methodology would be clearly demonstrated. The comprehensive plan would make use of the artifice of the technical map to both represent the dysfunctional present city and project the proper, healthy city of the future. In both forms, however, this representation would not merely present the urban area—in its infinite complexity and diversity—as it appeared to the untrained naked eye, but would refract it through the logic of the planners' invented categorization. This representation would make the city fully legible, but only to the planner's trained eye.

Together, the reciprocal survey and map formed the primary lens that expert planners of the Progressive Era used to see, and read, their cities. What was visible through these media would henceforth be manipulable, and what was not be would not be. Inevitably, planners would judge the existing city by comparison with their ideal maps. The spatial logic of the map determined how planners evaluated the observed, parsed city. This visual bias made planners look unfavorably upon any mapped urban configuration that appeared unbalanced, asymmetrical, or simply untidy. In contrast, parallelism, regular alignment, and proportionality defined the aesthetics of urban form represented in this abstract, diagrammatic manner. For planning professionals, clear order on a map self-evidently demonstrated proper functional relationships on the ground. Symmetry and balance reflected urban health, while chaotic mapped topographies implied blight and confusion. The visual logic of planning took schematic structural clarity for proper form, and valued form above all else.

A LEGIBLE METROPOLIS

Fortunately for the new city planners, this sort of categorization—the application of social criteria, invented commonality, and ideological signification to the surface of the metropolis—was a familiar part of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban life. Everyday city experience, as theorists such as Michel de Certeau and George Lipsitz have argued, evokes a complex and sophisticated network of meanings in ordinary urban sites.[45] Long before the advent of expert planning, there already existed in the minds of urbanites complex and sophisticated ways of knowing the city.

American cities of the first decades of the twentieth century were organized in ways that made them fairly comprehensible to their denizens (who were, in turn, well educated in the ways of understanding this structure). In Los Angeles, for instance, an array of technologies and devices of urban demarcation, common to most similar cities, was guaranteed to make the city fully legible to resident and expert

planner alike. Many of these techniques ordinarily went unquestioned—if not unobserved—by locals. They operated on a comprehensive scale and reflected the dominant order of a hierarchical culture. Consequently, their specific manifestations were naturalized and taken for granted. In fact, these subtle alignments of race, gender, and neighborhood were so obviously normalized that they entered what Antonio Gramsci has termed a people's "philosophy of common sense, which is the 'philosophy of non-philosophers,' or in other words the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man [*sic*] is developed."[46] The clearly defined categories of social hierarchy are, in a sense, so obvious to the residents of the city as to appear entirely natural. The policing of these common sense social and ideological categories effectively renders them invisible as such. Yet all served to reiterate unmistakably both social bounds and urban boundaries—borders the precise locations of which all urban residents were implicitly, even subconsciously, aware. The arrangements of public and private space within the metropolis cohesively reproduced structures of power in the city and in the larger culture. Topography and demographics converged, interpellating ordinary residents into the urban fabric, rendering the city clearly demarcated. Social order reinforced urban order. Of course, this common sense way of knowing the city was connected to common ways of understanding the larger society and culture. The logic of the city reflected broad ideological configurations brought down to earth.

Planners' categorization and mapping did not just impose an artificial order and logic on a virgin city; the experts often merely picked up and transcribed existing social segmentation and hierarchy. The text of the city was being written long before the planners applied their own technologies of scientific observation and manipulation to it. The machinations of the planners did, however, work to force the city into more rigid structural clarity, turning contingent formations into essential order. The fluid, ever-changing configurations of human environments turned, on a map or in a table of data, into solid and permanent empirical "fact." Moreover, professional observers' surveys and analyses performed another function: they provided a lasting representation of a comprehensible 1920s Los Angeles. Indeed, categorizational logic inscribed in numerous surveys and comprehensive plans serves as a useful conceptual archaeology of the city in that era. These snapshots are blurry, distorted, partial, and biased, but they transmit clearly Los Angeles as it was understood by experts during the period. They transmit something of the methodology of the planners—the specific ways these professionals went about seeing the city.

Perhaps most visible to planners was the social layout of their metropolis. Through familiar naturalized categories of identity—race, class, gender, as well as locality—urban observers could have confidence in their ability to properly read the city. These social classifications were included beside topographical and architectural ones as perceptible and manipulable elements of urban form. Alignments

of racial settlement appeared beside other necessary infrastructures—sewer lines, water mains, electrical grids, streetcar lines—on the experts' cherished maps and surveys. Given this importance, planners took especial care, when tracing these manifestations of identity through their various surveys over the years, to be precise about the locations and arrangements of racial and ethnic minority groups. Demographics and ideological common sense came together in the array of census data, academic sociological studies, city planning maps and surveys, and the like produced during the period. These documents revealed Los Angeles as a city rigidly divided in alignment with racial categories of identity. Consequently, the city was, in the eyes of its planners, an exceptionally well ordered, clean, and properly segregated metropolis.

Many of the city's residents seemed to appreciate this segregating order; it was one of Southern California's paramount virtues, according to some boosters. Dana Bartlett, for instance, saw Los Angeles as a "Better City" than many of its eastern counterparts precisely because it was free of the confusion and promiscuous mixing of those tenement-bound metropolises: "Another reason why Los Angeles is to be not only a greater but a better city, is found in the fact that it is largely an American city. The majority of its citizens are of American birth."[47] The homogeneous population was a trademark of Southern California in an era of large-scale foreign immigration and internal migration. Some Angelenos worked particularly hard to keep their city this way, innovating legal and quasi-legal means of maintaining the purity of their neighborhoods. Even if the population could not maintain its extreme demographic homogeneity as the city grew, it could—and did—clearly designate the boundaries between ethnic groups, thus enforcing a kind of spatial purity. As a result, by 1920, Los Angeles was segregated into subcommunities exhibiting an extraordinarily high degree of racial uniformity. African Americans, for instance, who accounted for 3.1 percent of the city's population in 1930,[48] were primarily locked into a handful of well-defined areas in the city:

> There were four separate and distinct black neighborhoods close to the center of the city. The largest was the South Central Avenue district, immediately south of the City Hall location. Second in size was the Temple Street district, located just northwest of the business district. Third largest was the relatively high-class Jefferson district, which was southwest of the downtown area, clearly separated from the Central Avenue district. Smallest of the four distinctly black neighborhoods was the Evergreen district, to the southeast of the central area. The fact that all four of the black neighborhoods were located entirely within three miles of the City Hall points out their highly centralized nature.[49]

As Mark Foster observes in "The Decentralization of Los Angeles in the 1920's": "In 1920 Los Angeles had twelve state assembly districts; the most heavily black district contained 40.1 per cent of the city's blacks."[50] By the end of the decade, a

single district held 70 percent of the African Americans in Los Angeles.[51] J. Max Bond's "The Negro in Los Angeles," one of a series of detailed sociological surveys undertaken at the University of Southern California under the direction of the eminent Emory Bogardus during the 1920s and 1930s, reveals the claustrophobia of segregation through the eyes of "one of the old settlers" of the teens: "We were encircled by invisible walls of steel. The whites surrounded us and made it impossible to go beyond these walls."[52] The city's racial boundaries were not faint cultural traces; they were tangible and seemingly insurmountable barriers. The categorizational logic of the planners ensured that the city's manifest demarcations were understood in no uncertain terms.

The outlying districts of the region were even more "well-ordered." African Americans "constituted only 0.8 per cent of Los Angeles County's population, exclusive of the city."[53] In fact, "even though many whites settled in the city during the 1920's, a higher proportion of the white newcomers to Los Angeles County settled in the outlying suburbs. . . . In 1930 many of the larger suburbs were practically devoid of minority group residents, a development deliberately designed by the whites who resided there."[54] If the city proper was strictly segregated between black and white, the suburbs were active markers of segregation. They did not contain segregated neighborhoods so much as they were themselves—on a grand scale—segregated neighborhoods. "Many jurisdictions routinely enforced Jim Crow patterns. Glendale, for example, boasted that 'no Negro ever sleeps overnight in our city.'"[55] Further, "though Glendale boasted of its lack of blacks, other suburbs were almost exclusively white. In 1930 South Gate's population was 98.8 per cent white; Glendale 98.3; Huntington Park, 98.2; Long Beach, 98.0; Inglewood, 97.8; Alhambra, 97.7 and Beverly Hills, 96.3. Of the ten largest suburbs in the metropolitan area in 1930, Pasadena contained the lowest percentage of whites with 90.9."[56] These suburbs were lily-white districts of the metropolis. These zones were explicitly set off, in the common sense human topography and racial ideology of the region, from the districts of minority group concentration, such as Central Avenue.[57]

Although Los Angeles was fairly typical of cities of the era in the strict segregation of African Americans (if a particularly extreme example), the city's system of racial division was not exclusively bipolar. Southern California was home to similarly extensive populations of other racial groups—specifically, Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, and a smaller number of Native Americans, Chinese Americans, and Filipino Americans. Each minority group was confined to specific urban zones, often by clear messages, such as a sign erected at Rose Hills Cemetery that read, "Japs, don't let the sun set on you here: keep moving—this is Rose Hill."[58] The segregation of Mexican Americans was particularly onerous, as it confined them to the most densely overcrowded parts of the city. Even those residing outside Los Angeles proper were confined to very limited areas:

Roughly 70,000 Mexicans lived outside of the city in the county. However, most of them were highly concentrated; of that number, 45,000 lived in Maravilla Park, a district located only three miles from City Hall at its farthest extremity. Thus, most of the Mexicans in the county lived in one clearly defined neighborhood just east of downtown Los Angeles, which straddled the city limits. A 1931 study revealed that while significant clusters of Mexicans lived in a number of the outlying suburbs, they were strictly segregated and lived in extreme poverty. The Mexicans in the city itself were also highly concentrated. Though most of the city's Mexicans lived just east of the downtown area, there was a somewhat smaller concentration of Mexicans south of the downtown area; as evidence of its proximity to the center of Los Angeles, its most remote point was only a mile and half from City Hall.[59]

Clearly, these racial and ethnic minorities lived in a very restricted range of places. Their patterns of residence were not random or coincidental: the racial identity of a community determined its location in Southern California. Furthermore, as Mark Foster notes in listing the locations of these minority communities, most of these discrete ethnic neighborhoods were located in the older, more central parts of the metropolis. For instance, "almost all of Los Angeles' Chinese lived in the Chinatown district, which was in the shadow of City Hall on North Broadway. A large concentration of Japanese resided in the 'Little Tokyo' district on East First Street, which was even closer to City Hall. Neither district extended more than a mile from that location."[60]

In general, "by the end of the 1920's, the bulk of Los Angeles' Oriental population, like the Mexicans and the blacks, was heavily concentrated close to the center of the city."[61] This centralization of minority communities more broadly defined the central city as a place of chaotic, densely juxtaposed racial groups, and the suburbs and outlying districts as homogeneously white. Yet even this was not so simple. Although the region was peculiar in its era for its low proportion of foreign-born European Americans, there did exist distinctions among whites that also led to residential segregation.[62]

Finally, a further, almost ubiquitous, segregation common to Los Angeles and most American cities was the division along class lines. The distance between the mansions of Pasadena and the farmworkers' barrio in nearby El Monte was measured not just in ethnicity or geography but in class as well. More generally, the fundamental spatial class distinction prevailing in the era was between suburb and city. Like other concentric metropolises, Los Angeles defined its suburban areas as places of refuge and escape from the toil, confusion, and labor of the city itself. The interurban train every day shuttled male white-collar managers out of the urbanized areas and into bucolic and remote bedroom communities. Although these satellite cities were beyond the workaday experience of many urbanites, the relative accessibility of the suburbs in Southern California was central to the booster promise of

an affluent lifestyle. Additionally, the increasing infusion of the region's population into these outlying areas during the 1910s, with the consequent expansion of the interurban system, demonstrates the ideological appeal of middle-class modes of life for residents of Southern California. The suburbs were attractive precisely because they clearly represented zones of enhanced economic status; their growth came in direct relation to the increasing social segregation and racial congestion of the more central parts of the city. Thus class relationships interwove with racial and gender dichotomies, further distinguishing among already significantly differentiated people and the places with which they were associated.

These types of segregation helped define the city into clear categories of identity that everyone could recognize and experts could identify as definitively as the street grid.[63] They erected strict boundaries that served, in effect, to lend order to the chaos of a growing metropolis. Of course, unlike the other mapped elements of urban topography, these social demarcations had to be constantly policed and reinforced, and the vigor with which some Angelenos went about doing just that reveals much about the importance they placed upon the racial legibility of their city. In "keep the neighborhood White" drives, the perceived importance of urban boundaries unmistakably reveals itself.[64] Over the course of the first decades of the century, Los Angeles introduced a number of sophisticated new technologies of spatial separation and racial distancing. One of the most effective of these new techniques was the homeowners association—the first homeowners association was the Los Feliz Improvement Association, formed in 1916—whereby neighborhoods could, in effect, regulate their own racial purity: "In the 1920s these associations, relying on restrictive deed covenants, helped realtors and developers keep upscale white neighborhoods segregated, successfully blocking African Americans and Asians from 95 percent of available housing."[65] Restrictive covenants were designed to protect the clear racial legibility of urban spaces. They were an intrinsic part of the city's fundamental structure. By the 1920s, such deed restrictions were almost universal, particularly in the suburbs, as Foster observes: "In the outlying sections of metropolitan Los Angeles, most of the homes were very new. Since many of the new homes had only recently been placed under long term racial restrictions, there were few opportunities for minority group residents to penetrate those areas. Not only did the courts uphold the legality of such racial restrictions, but they even made some of them retroactive. In 1928 the state Supreme Court ruled that blacks had to vacate certain portions of West Los Angeles where they had owned property for years!"[66] The same sorts of demographic categories that the expert planners perceived and used in their surveys were reaffirmed into law by the courts and defended in court by the residents. The racial categorization of Southern California urban spaces rested on firm foundations of legitimacy. The segregation of the city was legally binding and officially valid; the streets of the city were not merely conduits for traffic, they were important delineators of identity and ideology.

Even districts without formal neighborhood associations (and without deed restrictions written into the law) relied on similar, if more informal, schemes of enforcing their own homogeneity. Ordinary neighborhoods devised mechanisms of clearly delineating themselves within the fabric of Southern California, as surveys undertaken during the era reveal. One such study, an extremely sophisticated project undertaken by University of Southern California sociologist Bessie McClenahan, titled "The Changing Urban Neighborhood," traces the means of racial exclusion and the complex motivations underlying this sort of racism. McClenahan observes—at first hand—the constitution of a new community organization dedicated to the racial homogeneity of a particular neighborhood. At its initial meeting on 19 July 1922, McClenahan notes, the Anti-African Housing Association resolved a pact among its members: "At the meeting an informal agreement was drawn up and signed by eight persons which read as follows: 'It is hereby agreed by the undersigned property owners not to sell or agree to sell any property owned by us in the streets between Vermont Avenue and Budlong Avenue to people other than the Caucasian race.'"[67] Such ad hoc acts of boundary definition and reinforcement complemented broader markers of racial segregation that showed up on a planner's map as a definite line.

These boundaries are no less ordinary and familiar to Angelenos, regardless of specific identity. In fact, members of minority groups understood the importance and power of these delineations at least as well as did middle-class whites. Yet the consequences for whites of violating these boundaries during this period were disorientation and confusion, and perhaps the shame of getting lost in one's own town. For members of other racial and class groups, the stakes could be considerably higher. Police harassment and arrest—not to mention vigilante civilian actions—ensured that these urban boundaries remained sacrosanct. Common sense clearly informed all residents of the City of Angels—at least in rough outlines—of the racial topography of their city.

Race and class were not the only systems of common sense boundaries that operated in Los Angeles in the 1920s. In fact, they may not even be the most pervasive. That distinction probably belongs to divisions of gender, often so much a part of our own common sense as to remain invisible even today. The particular structure of gender ideology operating during the period, in Southern California and elsewhere in urban America, extended from the arrangement of large urban forms down to the structure of the predominant single-family home. Margaret Marsh describes in her *Suburban Lives* how growing trends during the late nineteenth century toward suburbia (trends so evident in early twentieth-century Los Angeles) led to new structures of domestic gender ideology as well as home architectural layout. The divisions between rooms in the house—between public rooms (the parlor and dining room; later, the "living room") and private rooms (particularly separate bedrooms)—mirrored gendered public/private distinctions developing, to an

extent, throughout the nineteenth century among bourgeois families.[68] These large-scale social trends, amplifying distinctions between home and outside world, resulted in a particular formulation of the architecture of gender in the early-twentieth-century suburb. The diurnal circulation of working men from suburban retreat to urban business district (by way of the interurban railroad) reinforced the strict segregation between private and public that separated not only home from community but suburb from city. In this way, one can trace a chain of analogies or ratios ranging from the macroscopic (public) down to the microscopic (private): Downtown : Neighborhood :: Street : House :: Living Room : Bedroom. In this system of gender rationality, suburban women tended to be segregated toward the private end of the continuum, while men moved within what was perceived to be a "public sphere."[69] Even within the larger public world of the city, gender marked the topography; as Harry Carr observed in the mid-1930s, "As nearly as any one could arrange the character of the town, Broadway is a women's street and Spring Street is a man's street."[70]

The divisions in the suburb mirror those between suburb and city and between women and men. Concomitant with this move toward gender segregation, specifically among the middle classes, was an ideological prescription for the separation of women from labor markets: women's labor was ideally dedicated to her family.[71] Likewise, as we have seen, the home served as a retreat and refuge for bourgeois men. Their labor was confined to the commercial city—the suburb ideally remained for them a place of repose. The properly gendered division of labor reinforced the properly gendered division of space. Both buttressed the properly gendered and well-adjusted family (which in turn supported the moral development of the larger society—and so the logic goes, ad infinitum). Consequently, clear distinctions between suburban neighborhood and central city, such as those of interest to city planners, necessarily evoked in the common sense of the 1920s a whole range of desirable social arrangements, implicating labor, architecture, and even transportation in this complex system of gender and urban topography. The interdependence of these ideological signifiers in the era appeared self-evident to such urban observers as Los Angeles's Dana Bartlett:

> The laying out of new subdivisions far out beyond the city limits, makes cheap and desirable home sites, obtainable for a multitude of working men, where they are able to build cheap bungalows or California houses, or at least to erect tents. "The Family Unit," the desire of the sociologist, can be recovered, when by rapid transit, giving a fare of from five to seven cents for a thirty minutes' ride, the working man can be induced to locate with his family far from the noisy city. No work for civic betterment is worth more than this.[72]

In Bartlett's view, the clearer the dichotomy between suburb and city, home and neighborhood, woman and man, the better the metropolis.

The stark contrast between suburb and city underwrote a complex of ideological understandings of urban topography. Professional planning of urban space, social segregation, civic boosterism, economic distinctions, and gender norms were all intimately interconnected in the common sense of the period. Once again, ordinary urban dwellers subconsciously picked up on a wide range of ideological signs in their progress through the city. Although the specific meanings of these boundaries differed for women and men of different racial, class, regional, or other identities, consciousness of the demarcations was a trait common to all.

Finally, perhaps the most familiar way urbanites were able to read their city was in terms of immediate locality. If one lived in the city, one *belonged* to a specific neighborhood. That district of the city was one's true social world. Indeed, in the neighborhood a relatively close-knit community could form, linking residents through their common association based on proximity, shared communal memories, and homogeneous demographics. Neighborhood defined the everyday limits of the urbanite's familiar space, locating the precise coordinates of home territory. Within Los Angeles, then, residential districts—and the streets that bounded them—conveyed additional patterns of significance, inscribing still further layers of signification onto the metropolis. Once more, markers of public and private space served to locate local residents in familiar and unfamiliar regions. In this way, common urban spaces, such as a downtown commercial district or a neighborhood park, evoked a range of meanings. It is in the difference between quasi-"private" neighborhood sites and more "public" municipal areas that understandings of the domain of appropriate political and communal action were rooted. For most locals, patterns of familiarity and association set one's neighborhood off from formal civic spaces. The demarcation of urban spaces in Los Angeles, as in most American metropolises of the age, was a thorough and pervasive process. The lines on planners' maps, derived from exhaustive scientific surveys, often merely reflected the existing delineation of space perceived every day by Angelenos as they went about their lives.

In a whole array of ways, segregation was important to Los Angeles in this period; clearly visible demarcations between spaces—ethnic, racial, gendered, economic, public and private—were central to Angelenos' perception of their city. At times, the maintenance of these stable boundaries seems more important than the specificities of the places so clearly marked by them. Professional understanding of the city depended upon an array of clearly legible boundaries and distinctions that made urban space, and the city as a whole, clearly comprehensible. Traditional cities—such as Los Angeles was in the those years—were rigidly segmented and sharply delineated. Much political energy and psychosocial activity went into maintaining and policing these distinctions. In large measure, these common sense boundaries are what made the increasingly diverse metropolis understandable and legible to its own residents (even as many chaffed under—and actively resisted—the implications of this segregation). Whatever other social ends this demarcation served,

the urban knowledge derived from it allowed ordinary urbanites—black, white, native, immigrant, Asian, Latino, male, female, rich, poor—to read clearly the signs of the city's ideological structure.

As I have indicated, it was the principal mission of the new ranks of expert professional scientific planners not only to recognize and to record these social traces upon the urban form but to preserve them. These segregations and associations were the essence of civic order; they were important technologies for the production of clear and comprehensible urban legibility. These common sense markers of urban space were boundaries that planners treated as no less essential and vital than those between commercial zones and residential zones, between city land and private property.[73] For residents and planners of the Progressive American city, urban distinctions—social, demographic, and topographic—were intertwined and interdependent. Efficient human environments were properly arranged and clearly segregated. Although specific boundaries could be questioned and manipulated, the existence of these divisions was largely taken for granted.[74] The boundaries were essential to the logic of the city. They made the urban landscape comprehensible, lending the city its legibility and order.

It was precisely this promise of legibility that undergirded all the various technologies of urban perception and regulation discussed here, from restrictive covenant and block agreement to scientific survey and city plan. Crucially, these technologies were all fundamentally compatible with the central task of making the heterogeneous city comprehensible to city planners and amenable to their ministrations—planning professionals were particularly quick to pick up on and to make use of already existing ideological urban categories and delineations. Proper perception and manipulation of the mechanisms of segregation were the fundamental supports of the planners' claim to comprehensive vision. The planners therefore promised to bring increased legibility to a potentially chaotic urban environment, both methodologically (through their technologies of observation) and empirically (through their efforts at urban restructuring and healing). Implicitly, they also promised to maintain structural hierarchies of identity in a rapidly growing and evolving metropolis. Therefore, what the planners of 1920 sought to accomplish in Los Angeles—to bring the city into focus and to make it clearly comprehensible—was part of a larger project of envisioning urbanity throughout the nation, as well as being deeply relevant to the specific situation of twentieth-century Southern California. Ultimately, what was at stake in this desire to view the city comprehensively and clearly was the very meaning of urbanism in a modern age. Through various contestations of this meaning, questions of Los Angeles's urban legibility would reassert themselves repeatedly in the years to come.

With powerful tools to reveal the city's social and topographical boundaries and elements, city planners took upon themselves the heavy responsibility of maintaining the region's legibility. As the city's comprehensibility depended upon the clear

segregation of urban elements (districts, traffic streams, and people), planners hoped to use their critical technologies of urban observation—such as the scientific quantitative survey and the comprehensive map—to help them maintain and solidify those important boundaries within a shirting physical topography. This task they saw as necessarily "progressive," although it was in many ways reactionary. Nevertheless, these men were heirs to a long booster tradition, and they sought to plan the growth of their emerging metropolis to make it a greater and even, as they saw it, a "better city." In the process, Los Angeles's expert scientific planners even hoped to use their powers of observation (or prophecy) to prepare the future of the American city, with Southern California as a utopia of future possibility.

TRAFFIC AND URBAN VISIBILITY

Given these lofty ambitions and powerful techniques of urban observation, many historians have found it ironic that the first act of Los Angeles's new City Planning Commission was the disastrous 1920 downtown parking ban. Crucially, from the moment this parking ban was put into force that November to such calamitous effect, Los Angeles's planners were forced to devote the vast majority of their efforts to a rearguard action against traffic problems (see figure 4). This preoccupation, according to many urban historians of Los Angeles, is the main reason for the reputed failure of city planning in the years between the wars: "The [planning] commissions, for all practical purposes, focused their everyday staff activities on two principal tasks: the rationalization of land subdivision activity in the county, and the provision of adequate streets and highways, primarily through negotiated agreements with the land developers."[75] Both Martin Wachs, in "Autos, Transit, and the Sprawl of Los Angeles," and Mark Foster, first in "The Decentralization of Los Angeles during the 1920's" and later in such articles as "The Model-T, the Hard Sell, and Los Angeles's Urban Growth," argue that planners were incapacitated by the need to constantly regulate traffic conditions. As Foster puts it in his most recent history of that period's urban planning, *From Streetcar to Superhighway,* "About all [planners] had time or energy to do . . . was to gain rights of way out in the country for adequate streets and highways before profit-crazed realtors choked off any such advance planning by laying out thoughtlessly conceived subdivisions. . . . By 1930, a local planner complained that 90 percent of their time was consumed by zoning variance cases and minor street changes; he stated that local planners did some replanning, but little original planning."[76] In their attempts to keep up with ever-increasing traffic loads, these historians argue, planners were essentially unable to do much actual planning. As we have seen, this judgment has reached something of a consensus in recent years.

[Figure 4 here]

Nevertheless, it is wrong. Traffic was important for planners, both analytically and strategically. Planners especially emphasized traffic in viewing the city, both

FIGURE 4. Downtown Los Angeles, 1919. Los Angeles Public Library, Security Pacific Collection.

because it easily fit into the favored organic metaphorical rhetoric (flows and circulation, blockages and congestion) and because it was one of the few detectable ways they could relate actual human behavior to the functional realities of the metropolis. The city, they knew from their surveys, consisted of discrete elements in specific locations. They could relate these elements through the visualization tool of the map, but in this way they perceived the relationships between elements only in the abstract, by surmising from physical proximity and theoretical model. They had little opportunity to directly perceive motion in the city—the everyday interconnections, exchanges, and transactions between identified elements. Traffic afforded planners one means of determining these necessary, ubiquitous, but largely invisible everyday relationships. Movements by individuals, as they went about their private business, collectively traced the functional connections between urban sites. Commuting between home and work or on shopping trips would definitively reveal which business areas served which residential tracts, which houses belonged to workers in which businesses, and so forth. These visible traces also showed the routes—or "lines of communication," in planners' terminology—between these elements. Entire streetcar infrastructures, for example, could be surveyed, mapped, and correlated with measured average ridership (especially through flow-volume diagrams) to provide a general sense of human urban movement.

But the real indicator of where people go is given by automobile traffic, as that

could be easily measured by traffic counts and parking spaces.[77] Automobiles could be easily counted and traced, and were therefore the closest planners got to individual citizens on an empirical level. Traffic, quite simply, was the detectable trace of human activity in the city, as well as the motion animating the planners' maps. For experts so dependent upon static, snapshot surveys and rigid maps to properly see the bustling metropolis, traffic was a window both onto everyday change and onto the essential functional relationships between solidly identified urban landmarks. Traffic indicated circulation, and circulation indicated the living operation of the metropolis on a daily basis.

In addition to its evident visibility, ordinary road congestion was also perceived early on by planners to be an opportunity for—not an impediment to—effective and ambitious planning, for traffic lay at the heart of what was wrong with the existing metropolis. First, it was clear to planners that traffic congestion energized Angelenos during the 1920s. It was a problem that dominated discourse within the city, prompting extreme measures and a tolerance for radical solutions. Further, it brought together a wide range of public figures into a grand coalition in support of traffic relief. Planners, boosters, and downtown elites all found common cause in this crusade, and the promise of urban planning professionals to treat this chronic malady allowed them much greater authority and power than they might otherwise have been able to claim. Indeed, traffic was for planners the ticket to municipal influence out of proportion to their material status within the city's power structures. The slowness of the streets put the enterprising experts on the fast track to the sort of institutional status that could allow them to act on their ambitions.

Second, Los Angeles's planners recognized early on that traffic was not a momentary inconvenience. Planners brought to this discourse on congestion a holistic and comprehensive vision, and for these experts, traffic was a symptom of important flaws with the city's urban form. It was not merely the understandable side effect of growth or of widespread adoption of the private automobile, but an intrinsic feature of the concentric modern city. Street traffic was caused not by too many cars or by inadequate streets but by fundamentally flawed urban structure: "A city is built up entirely from its traffic routes—suburban, street, railroad, and vehicular. These traffic routes determine the arteries of travel which make our business centers at the most important intersections, and radiate thence out to outlying residence districts. They therefore determine all real estate values. They are the limitation of our convenience in getting about the community and if they are not properly laid out, can cause absolutely the wrong and most harmful development of a city."[78] For Los Angeles's planning experts, street congestion was a symptom of a larger problem, which was intrinsic to the existing metropolis. Growing public furor over traffic jams, though, might allow planners to justify the radical measures they increasingly felt were necessary to correct the structure of the city.

Fundamentally, the planners believed that, despite its much-publicized ameni-

ties, Southern California was in trouble. The city's urban problems were ultimately traceable to its conventional organization. In the traditional American urban topography, the central city sat at the core of a concentric orbit of suburban residential areas (see figure 5). As Kenneth Jackson argues in his landmark *Crabgrass Frontier,* although Americans since the 1880s viewed the more rural suburban areas as the most desirable areas for residence, in this period these enclaves were generally only accessible to the middle and upper classes, who, of course, made up only a small proportion of the total urban population. This trend toward middle-class suburbia had been the original impetus for the streetcar and interurban systems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In Los Angeles, however, the Pacific Electric interurban system had encouraged a particularly fragmented urban landscape, as the Mediterranean myth promulgated by generations of boosters had fostered a quasi-rustic lifestyle. Because the Pacific Electric was so intimately bound up in far-flung speculative land ventures, the system had spread a tremendous distance from the outskirts of the city. The PE rolled far further into the orange groves and brush-covered hills than any other comparable traction system. The interurban went where land was cheap, operating at a loss, the better to sell distant land for development and, collaterally, to chain the new residents to the train. Los Angeles tended to have a spotty pattern of settlement as a result, with large gaps in its blanket of residential coverage, which further increased commute times and fragmented the metropolitan area. Now Los Angeles was ringed by increasingly distant layers of single-family, low-density bungalow developments. Further, since development in the region was primarily a phenomenon of the twentieth century and a product of the interurbans, the suburbs housed a disproportionately large segment of the urban population. Consequently, few of Los Angeles's residents were living in high-density downtown dwellings by the early 1920s, and the downtown had never developed as a walking city, as eastern metropolises had. Nevertheless, the planners' surveys soon revealed that the downtown district had a much higher density than other parts of the region—high even compared with more centralized cities—but it was very compact.

The planners almost immediately recognized that Los Angeles was even more of a concentric city than most, and as a result the disadvantages of this urban topography were correspondingly more severe in Los Angeles. Traffic was only the most visible of these urban ailments endemic to the concentric metropolis, but it was serious. By the 1920s, despite the success of the Pacific Electric, many Angelenos were commuting by private automobile. Worse, this trend was particularly intense in the suburbs, where growth was so rapid that even the Pacific Electric often could not keep pace. Increasingly, these new suburbanites were driving downtown every day, and to deal with the new developments, the Pacific Electric had inaugurated motor coach service to supplement its trains in newly built areas. These buses merely added to the inbound commute, as did the hundreds of private jitneys that sprang up dur-
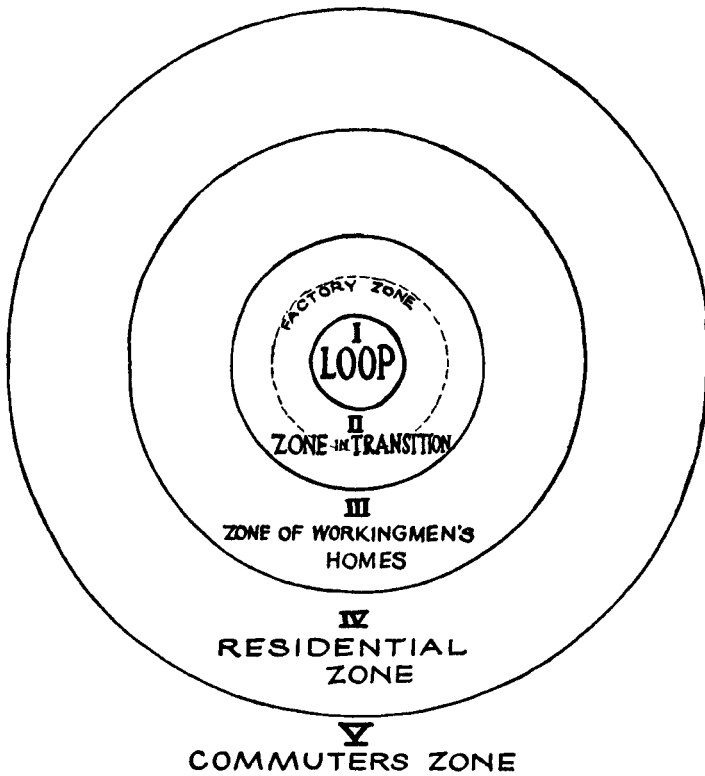
FIGURE 5. The Burgess model of concentric city growth. From Robert Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 51. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Press.

ing the decade to cannibalize the chronically encumbered and tardy streetcars' business. All this traffic was converging on the central business district every workday.

The traffic situation in the existing city was simply untenable. Metaphorically put, as it usually was, the city was suffering from a chronic case of congestive heart failure: circulation around the heart was too restricted to allow the proper operation of that critical organ. The arterial highways connecting downtown with the rapidly expanding suburbs were sclerotic; they no longer provided adequate traffic flow. Given the congested state of these vital conduits, the prognosis for the city was grim. If things were this bad in the city at a bit over half a million people, how severe would the problem be when the population someday approached—as seemed inevitable— a million or more?

The short-term solution was obvious: pressure on the city's circulatory system had to be reduced by increasing the capacity of major arteries. Nevertheless, as the metropolis expanded, the planners foresaw, residential development would move farther and farther into the outskirts, and the Pacific Electric would turn more and more to buses. The load on the arterial regional highways would increase without end. The congestion downtown would increase commensurately, until the commercial and industrial districts at the heart of the city would again begin to fail from lack of proper circulation. No matter how much the planners worked at the arduous task of widening streets, the congestion would intensify, because the number of commuters from the outlying areas would correspondingly increase. The planners, their vision aided by surveys and maps, could clearly see that under extrapolated present conditions, the city would gradually suffocate under the weight of its own expansion. This logic was consistent and had powerful implications. It also directly contradicted the plain common sense of most urbanites in this period. Most American cities, including New York and Chicago, were celebrating their grip over ever-larger urban regions and centering their municipal identities on their towering downtowns. In this respect, then, planners questioned the very essence of urban modernity as it was understood at the time.

In Los Angeles, in contrast to those eastern metropolises, planners seemed willing to take their irreverent conclusions to their logical limits and to directly challenge those widespread notions of modern urbanity. In fact, they were already contemplating dramatic solutions to the problems of centralization as they saw them. And here, once again, planners saw traffic regulation not as an impediment to "real" planning but as its essence. By attending to the effects of the automobile, they would be empowered to effect far more structural change than they might have otherwise been allowed. Endemic concern about urban congestion translated easily into widespread support for road projects.[79] But not only would this need to "modernize" the city's transportation infrastructure allow them far greater scope in rooting out potential urban ailments, it would allow them to shape the city's future. Planners believed that control over the layout of the streets was key to controlling the future growth of the city. Proper, orderly development could be planned in advance through this simple mechanism. As Robert Fogelson observes: "The planners, whose regulatory authority here came from local and state legislation, designated the city's major traffic and the county's regional highway schemes as the bases for subdivision in Los Angeles."[80] Fogelson sees planner interest in such details as subdivision control and road plating as distracting from the larger promise of planning—"In one regulation after another the planners revealed an overriding concern for automobile transport"[81]—but provision for future growth of the urban body was the very focus of advance planning, and the key to this strategy was the planners' control over the street system. In practice, grafting new arteries—the alignment of streets—provided both a useful justification for and an efficient means of

urban intervention. Streets constituted the most important element in the city's circulatory system, and as such, they would regulate the flow of goods, resources, and people, and thus prevent congestion throughout the region. This system would be structural as well as circulatory, in that the provision of future streets would shape the development of future subdivisions. By carefully laying out the road grid, the planners would be able to prepare a more efficient and healthy city and to plan—in skeletal and venous outline—the city's future. In the view of the planners, infrastructure was destiny.

But why did planners value so highly the potential to build the future city from scratch? Despite its traffic problems, Los Angeles was clearly already developing into a major American metropolis—it was, judging from its rapid growth, quite an urban success. The reason Los Angeles's planners wished to exert such extraordinary control over the future shape of the city was that they did not in fact wish the metropolis to continue on its current course of development. Planning experts in Los Angeles did indeed have a vision for the city. They seized upon control over the street system and the ordinary suburban subdivisions it anchored as the primary means of achieving that dream precisely because this vision would promise to redefine the meaning of modernity in the urban context. If properly enacted, this design would, they expected, prevent future blight from developing in their city of the future, and if all went according to plan, it would also ameliorate the existing congestion in the built-up parts of the metropolis. It was here that Los Angeles's planners turned into radical utopians and mobilized the booster tradition to envision Southern California as the birthplace of a new model of urbanism. In this aspiration, Los Angeles's planners were on the leading edge of a tide of urban revisionism that was creeping through professional planning circles. Unlike virtually everyone else in this growing traditional centralized city, as well as in contemporary cities, such as New York and Chicago, the apostates of the City Planning Commission felt sure that the continued high-density intensification of the traditional concentric urban-suburban city need no longer be the sole avatar of urban utopianism.

VISIONS OF MODERN URBANITY

A strange ecstatic feeling at such times often possessed me. There flowed through every nerve of my body . . . strains of electricity, giving intense and long continued physical pleasure. . . . The crowded streets—the signs of wealth and prosperity—the bustle—the very confusion and disorder appealed to me, and I was filled with delight.

EBENEZER HOWARD, ON THE EXPERIENCE OF WALKING THE STREETS OF LONDON, QUOTED IN BUDER, "EBENEZER HOWARD" (398)

In questioning the concentric model of modern urban aspiration, Los Angeles's planners were contemplating the unthinkable. Ever since the late nineteenth century, it

had been fixed in the American popular imagination that the city of the future would necessarily be a vertical city—a metropolis of skyscrapers. This city would radiate from a towering central core to take the surrounding countryside under its gaze. Shafts of steel and concrete would puncture the clouds, evincing the industrial age's triumph over gravity and human scale. The skyscraper city reveled in its complexity— it was a mark of increasingly evolved coordination among social functions. This utopian city would become more and more like a machine, and it would reflect society's own advancing mechanization and progress. This was all powerfully evocative for would-be cosmopolitan "moderns" of the early decades of the century. Although we will explore the details of this dominant concentric model of urbanity in much more depth later, it is worth a brief digression to look at one particularly influential expression of the dominant notion of the urban future in order to understand just how unorthodox was the scheme that the planners were contemplating.

This ambitious vision of the modern metropolis was best popularized by Edward Bellamy's immensely successful *Looking Backward: 2000–1887,* published in 1888. In this exemplary urban utopia, Bellamy identified concentration as the essence of modernity. Concentration of wealth, concentration of social power, concentration of resources—these all led to the misery and conflict of the day. Yet *Looking Backward* is by no means a nostalgic book. Bellamy sees in trends toward increasing scale and accumulation not only the sources of society's problems but also the key to their solution. Capitalizing on narratives of progress and social evolution so popular in the age, Bellamy's tract is written as science fiction. It projects its representative gentleman of nineteenth-century Boston—Julian West—113 years into the future. Fittingly for such a progressive tale, this future is a bright one. More than a century of progress has magically brought the forces of concentration to their logical conclusion. Boston, previously a site of "squalor and malodorousness,"[82] has now become a shining city. Waking up in this new twentieth-century Boston, West cannot even be sure he recognizes his hometown: "At my feet lay a great city. Miles of broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings, for the most part not in continuous blocks but set in larger or smaller enclosures, stretched in every direction. Every quarter contained large open squares filled with trees, along which statues glistened and fountains flashed in the late-afternoon sun. Public buildings of a colossal size and architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side. Surely I had never seen this city nor one comparable to it before."[83]

The city exemplifies the productive power of concentration, directed under the coming utopian scheme of social organization to fulfill its promise of abundance and prosperity. The gargantuan metropolis is but the most visible sign of a larger effort to harness the power of ever greater scale to common ends. In many respects this vision was emblematic of a range of mainstream views common by the early years of the century whose shining conclusion *Looking Backward* depicted. Indus-

trial expansion and conglomeration marked the era. Further, modern cities were hosting an intensifying concentration of capital and industrial might during this period, marking this wealth and power by the proliferation of these immense and technically complex skyscrapers. Likewise, censuses indicated an increasing flight of America's population from rural areas to these new dense cities—labor joined capital in ever greater concentration. Urbanity dominated the popular imagination of the future, as these trends toward accumulation and centralization became unmistakable tokens of the modern age.

Yet, by the first decades of this century, against all this manifest progress stood another vision of the modern metropolis. This was a very different conception, which was grounded more in nostalgia for the frontier and the small town than in the promise of dense urban arcologies of the future. It sought to envision the city as self-contained, not cosmopolitan. This was a vision of a decentralized city of lower density and higher comprehensibility. This model of urbanism was essentially rural, even pastoral, in its proclivities. It reflected a rebellion against nineteenth-century trends toward greater urban concentration, and it was deeply invested in a sort of nostalgic futurism. That said, this decentralized vision was, in a new way, strongly utopian, and could also make strong claims to modernity. In its pure form, it promised a new urbanism, in which the new modern city could emerge as a synthesis of town and country.[84] This, its most powerful and influential version, was espoused by the seer/stenographer Ebenezer Howard, one in a grand tradition of British utopian visionaries, in his design for the "garden city."

Howard was truly a dreamer. He had been strongly influenced by Bellamy's utopian novel but had turned against that utopian future's foundational logic. Whereas Bellamy based his prophecy on the modern gospel of concentration, Howard put his faith in decentralization. Whereas Bellamy had seen great potential in the dense modern metropolis, if only organized on a just and rational basis, Howard viewed the great cities of his day as absolutely hopeless. Howard was certainly not antiurban—he found the metropolis of his day stimulating and exciting—but he abhorred the social conditions prevalent in these conurbations. For the working class, Howard thought, the modern metropolis was a modern hell: "Crowded, ill-ventilated, unplanned, unwieldy, unhealthy cities—ulcers on the very face of our beautiful island."[85] His garden city alternative would offer an urban experience set in a verdant landscape. Instead of steel, asphalt, and concrete, this city would revel in wood, stone, and orderly vegetation. In this way, Howard appropriated for his urban vision, or revision, both American frontier ideology of renewal through contact with the land and a more English fascination with the romance of the contemporary landscape garden. Howard's would be a city rooted in a renewing and calmingly benevolent nature.

The garden city was not, though, merely a more pastoral version of that traditional concentric city. It was to be fundamentally different—and the espousing of

this difference was Howard's greatest heresy against received planning knowledge. Howard wished to abandon the crowded cities altogether, for their very structure was irretrievably flawed. He wished to overturn the dominant contemporary association of modernity with concentration and density by arguing that the metropolises of his day were wholly inappropriate for the modern world. At their essence, Howard argued in his hugely influential tract, *Garden Cities of To-morrow,* such cities were based on unsound principles:

> These crowded cities have done their work; they were the best which a society largely based on selfishness and rapacity could construct, but they are in the nature of things entirely unadapted for a society in which the social side of our nature is demanding a larger share of recognition—a society where even the very love of self leads us to insist upon a greater regard for the well-being of our fellows. The large cities of today are scarcely better adapted for the expression of the fraternal spirit than would a work on astronomy which taught that the earth was the centre of the universe be capable of adaptation for use in our schools.[86]

Implicitly, Howard here offers himself as the Galileo of urban doctrine. In his apostatic view, the old concentric cities were as flawed as the Ptolemaic understanding of the solar system. Whereas, in its geocentric folly, the traditional model of urbanism had placed the large metropolis at the heart of the settled region, surrounded by a constellation of suburbs, Howard sought to disrupt and debunk the concentric emphasis on the city by replacing it with an ideal of self-contained towns ordered on a more human scale. As a result, the garden city would be tailored to promote social familiarity and community interaction instead of the alienation and impersonality endemic to the metropolis. As Robert Fishman points out in his study of Howard's ideology, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century,* the difference in scale was "the fundamental principle of the garden city: Radical hopes for a cooperative civilization could be fulfilled only in small communities embedded in a decentralized society."[87]

The garden city was the antidote to the concentration of resources and population that characterized the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century city. Howard's utopian urbanism envisioned a self-contained commune, open to both common enterprise and small-scale proprietor capitalism.[88] This city could be built in an existing (preferably agricultural) setting and would free the working population from the tyranny of the slum and the tenement. Similarly, this properly proportioned and humane city would liberate its inhabitants from the cold canyon corridors created by towering blocks of skyscrapers. All social interaction would be restored to harmonious balance. Central to this dream of harmony was the city's greenbelt: the integrity of the garden city would be protected by a wide buffer of agricultural land around the verdant city. The garden would both surround the garden city and run through it. Green areas would demarcate parts of the city, as well

as marking the city off from its surroundings. In this way, the utopian town would continually expose its inhabitants to the regenerating influence of sunlight, clean air, and abundant foliage. At the same time, and this is crucial, the garden would maintain a comprehensible urban legibility—it would prevent the city from sprawling and clearly demarcate its internal districts. There would be no alienating urban confusion because the city would be constructed on a human scale and limited to that scale by its greenbelt. There would be no social unrest because the city would form a unified community, offering its amenities to all classes—which would be separated from each other only by parks and hedgerows. There would be no traffic and commuting because this would be a walking city, with its residential districts an easy rustic stroll from its industrial and commercial zones. The garden would regulate, buffer, and mediate all social interaction, allowing for a gracious communal order.

These clear separations and connections in Howard's garden city plan were most famously represented in a series of diagrams presented in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow,* which soon achieved the status of icons. These maps graphically revealed the essence of the garden city ideal. The basic circular map of the model garden city represented in compact shorthand the order and balance structuring the functional relationships in the ideal city (see figures 6 and 7). This was more than mere representation, however. Although Howard was quite careful to include a disclaimer that the diagram was intended only as an abstract conceptual model—"N.B. A diagram only. Plan must depend upon site selected"—it was the iconic circular map that came to dominate conceptions of the garden city plan in the years to come.[89]

[Figure 6 here][Figure 7 here]

As with all such maps, the intrinsic functional relationships could only be assumed from proximity, and thus the egalitarian principles that structured Howard's utopia were ignored by subsequent garden city enthusiasts. Only the most general notions of balanced social harmony were perceived by observers; that much, at least, could be inferred by anyone with an interest in planning, merely by examining the symmetry and clarity of the imagined topography. If the detailed descriptions of Howard's prose proved inspiring to dedicated readers, the real proof of the garden city concept seemed to lie in this simple diagram. The map captured the imagination of readers; it graphically presented the (topographical) essence of Howard's utopian vision.[90]

It was critical to Howard's vision of social peace that his city be fully self-contained, with all urban resources integrated into a functional network. Consequently, the garden city would offer on its municipally (and democratically) controlled land both housing and employment. This would not become yet another middle-class suburb, as Robert Fishman observes: "Howard planned the Garden City to be a manufacturing center in which factories would necessarily be close to the homes. In order to separate the residential areas and also to ensure that everyone would be within walking distance of his place of work, Howard put the facto-
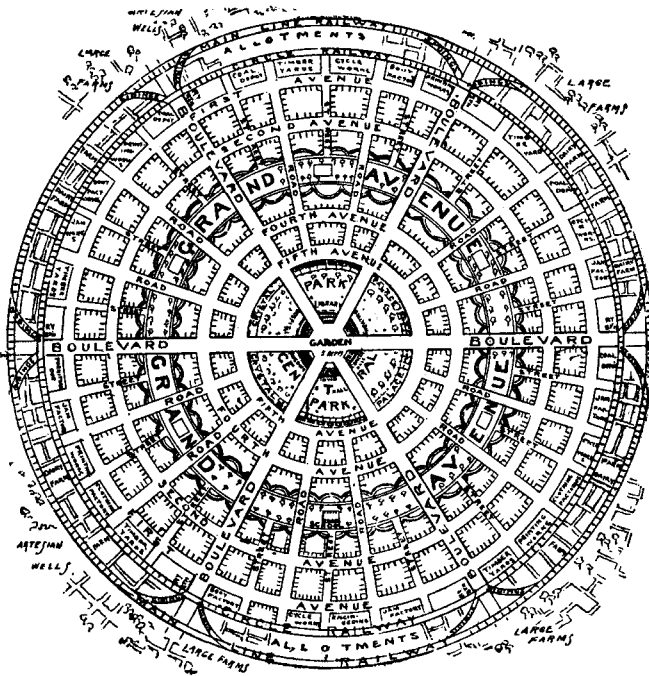
FIGURE 6. Ebenezer Howard's garden city plan, circa 1899.

ries at the periphery of the city."[91] This tight physical association of residence and industry was the hallmark of Howard's vision and its primary claim to utopian urbanism. This model of development would offer, in close proximity, all the most important amenities and social structures of the metropolis, without the endless vertical and horizontal sprawl.

As Lewis Mumford adamantly insisted in his introduction to the most popular mid-twentieth-century edition of *Garden Cities of To-morrow,* this vision offered an ideal way to preserve human proportions in the urban framework: "The Garden City, as Howard defined it, is not a suburb but the antithesis of a suburb: not a more rural retreat, but a more integrated foundation for an effective urban life."[92] The garden city was to be primarily urban; it was a new form of urbanity: "Here again I must utter a warning against those who mistake Howard's programme for one of breaking down the distinction of town and country and turning them into an amorphous suburban mass. . . . For the Garden City, as conceived by Howard, is not a loose indefinite sprawl of individual houses with immense open spaces over the whole landscape: it is rather a compact, rigorously confined urban grouping. . . . He cannot be accused of being an advocate of urban sprawl."[93] Here again Mum-
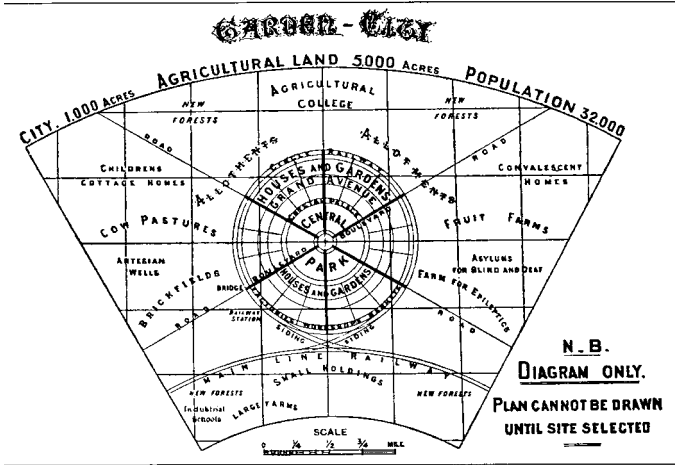
FIGURE 7. A garden city and its environs. From Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1898).

ford is defending Howard's landmark ideal of decentralization against the largely suburban image it had acquired by 1945. It is important to remember that in 1920 decentralization ideology was intimately bound up, for most planners, not so much with Levittowns (still decades in the future) or other suburban developments, but with this new urbanism of Howard's garden city. The garden city was intended to be clearly distinct from both suburban retreats and urban conglomerations. The power of this foundational notion of the small, self-contained, decentralized *city* was undeniable in this age, and it offered a powerful, fully "modern" counterpoint to the skyscraper urbanism then prevalent.

The depth of the cosmopolitanism in his program and the fact that he was not merely advocating a return to small town life are best illustrated in Howard's plan for the final apotheosis of the garden city ideal: the construction of "Social Cities." As Mumford put it, "Not the least part of Howard's conception was his emphasis upon the grouping of garden cities: he realized that the advantages of a single city would be multiplied by the creation of 'town-clusters,' groups or constellations of such cities."[94] *Garden Cities of To-morrow* offered a vision of urban expansion that projected the benefits of the compact community across a vast geographic expanse. Although the individual garden city would be capped at about thirty thousand residents, Howard made provision for future growth:

I think, feel confident that the people of Garden City will not for a moment permit the beauty of their city to be destroyed by the process of growth. But it may be urged—

if this be true, will not the inhabitants of Garden City in this way be selfishly preventing the growth of their city, and thus preclude many from enjoying its advantages? Certainly not. There is a bright, but overlooked, alternative. The town will grow; but it will grow in accordance with a principle which will result in this—that such growth shall not lessen or destroy, but ever add to its social opportunities, to its beauty, to its convenience.[95]

This growth would not lead to another gargantuan London or New York. It would instead be subordinated to the same mechanism that regulated the garden city itself. The comprehensible proportions of the city would be rigorously maintained.

Garden Cities of To-morrow described the ideal progress and expansion of Howard's utopian city into a larger web of well-ordered communities:

> Garden City is built up. Its population has reached 32,000. How will it grow? It will grow by establishing—under Parliamentary powers probably—another city some little distance beyond its own zone of "country," so that the new town may have a zone of country of its own. I have said "by establishing another city," and, for administrative purposes there would be two cities; but the inhabitant of the one could reach the other in a very few minutes; for rapid transit would be specially provided for, and thus the people of the two towns would in reality represent one community.[96]

Garden Cities of To-morrow envisioned an urban network where countless garden cities could be brought together by an interurban transit system into a sort of decentralized cluster. Each city would maintain its individual identity, jealously protected by its greenswards and zones of functional segregation. Together, these communities would form a composite urbanity, but all practical activity would be confined within each internally.

The carefully structured association of residence and occupation would be preserved by the buffer zones to prevent confusion, while allowing a larger cosmopolitan totality. Here, each city operates as an individual unit, not subordinated by commuting patterns to a larger metropolis. Any hierarchy within this network of garden cities would reflect not a concentric regional dominance but rather a purely symbolic concern for geometrical order and legibility:

> This principle of growth—this principle of always preserving a belt of country round our cities would be ever kept in mind til, in course of time, we should have a cluster of cities . . . so grouped around a Central City that each inhabitant of the whole group, though in one sense living in a town of small size, would be in reality living in, and would enjoy all the advantages of, a great and most beautiful city; and yet all the fresh delights of the country—field, hedgerow, and woodland—not prim parks and gardens merely—would be within very few minutes' walk or ride.[97]

Even this "Central City" would have a strictly limited population (Howard suggests fifty-eight thousand people), and would never exert the domination over its surrounding communities that the concentric metropolis relied upon. The self-
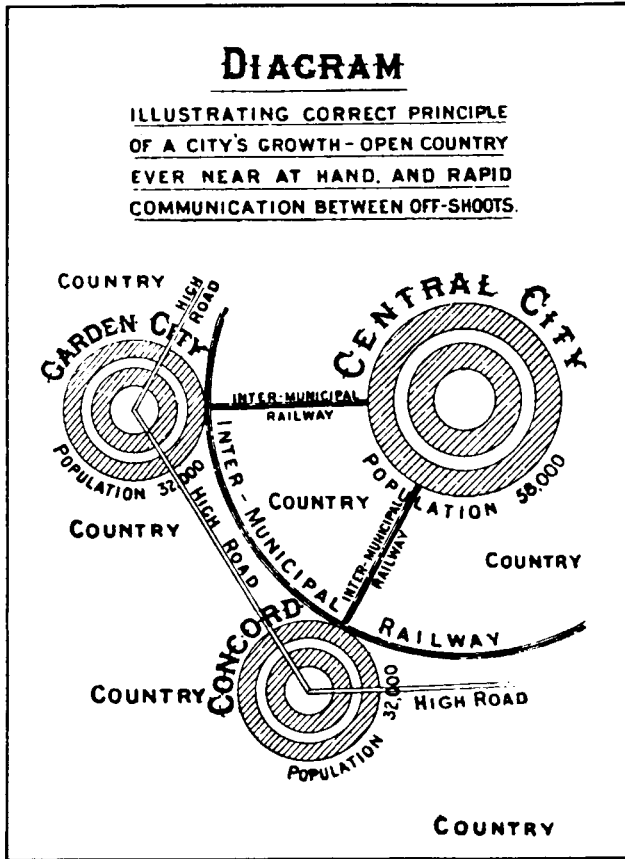
FIGURE 8. Relation of garden cities to one another. From Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1898).

contained economies of the individual garden cities would be a safeguard to their independence and would free their residents to use the amenities of a somewhat larger urban area without falling victim to congestion and blight. Once more, Howard illustrated his conception with an abstract diagram (see figure 8). The plain geometrical elegance of this sketch of the garden city cluster again testified power-fully, in the eyes of planners, to the natural beauty and efficiency of the underlying model. No existing metropolis, as represented in survey maps, could compare in cleanliness and self-evident order to this ideal.

In its essence, this garden city vision offered a model of distributed urbanity that

was expansive without being chaotic. It restructured the nature of the city from an emphasis on concentrated, centralized density to one of decentralized idyllic communalism. Whereas the traditional late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century model of urbanism suggested that continuing population growth would place an increasingly unsustainable burden on the circulatory and managerial systems of the central city, the garden city model seemed to be adapted to indefinite expansion.

The cosmopolitan character of the urbanism would only increase with growth, without affecting the circulation or density of the individual modules. While many urban planners and most urbanites assumed that the only response to increasing density was the expansion of the city in another spatial dimension—hence the apparent inevitability of skyscraper urbanism—garden city advocates saw the future in a network of neighborhood-based clusters of a uniformly low density. This was a model of social, as well as urban, progress, as Fishman sums it up:

> Within the city there would be both quiet residential neighborhoods and facilities for a full range of commercial, industrial, and cultural activities. For Howard did not conceive the Garden City as a specialized "satellite town" or "bedroom town" perpetually serving some great metropolis. Rather, he foresaw the great cities of his time shrinking to insignificance as their people desert them for a new way of life in a decentralized society. No longer would a single metropolis dominate a whole region or even a whole nation. Nor would the palatial edifices and giant organization of the big city continue to rule modern society. Instead, the urban population would be distributed among hundreds of Garden Cities whose small scale and diversity of functions embody a world in which the little man has finally won out.[98]

Garden Cities of To-morrow's powerful representation of a decentralized society was tremendously influential in the decades following its publication. Yet the influence of the model did not extend to the full social utopian program. Indeed, the primary impact of the garden city idea was not as a theory of social organization but as a program for town design. Howard's plan was so practical, and so pragmatically expressed, that its utopian social elements were easily separated from its more physical concepts, and the plan, soon stripped of its socialist overtones, proved exceptionally well adapted to the needs of the new planning profession. Sometime planner Mumford put it plainly: "*Garden Cities of To-morrow* has done more than any other single book to guide the modern town planning movement and to alter its objectives."[99] The disciplinary dialect of regional planning—to which Mumford and his contemporaries were deeply committed—was, by the early 1920s, fully invested in the realization of the garden city urban structure. As John L. Thomas explained in a retrospective look at utopian effects on planning ideology, "Even more valuable to twentieth-century planners than their political legacy was the utopians' model of the good society as a composite of city and country."[100] Consequently, by the time British industrialists (the men behind the Cadbury and Lever fortunes)

constructed a garden city at Letchworth in the late 1920s, on farmland thirty-five miles outside of London, Howard's urban alternative had already been fully assimilated into the technical expertise of the planners. As Stanley Buder argues in *Visionaries and Planners,* his detailed study of the garden city movement's transformation from social program to architectural doctrine, the garden city's chief legacy was in regional planning: "Letchworth served as a standing example of the modern art or science of town planning. Its lesson, or so supporters contended, was that model communities were greatly superior to those erected by speculative builders. Letchworth's very existence provided a rallying point and a showcase for the emerging profession of town planning."[101]

In the context of the 1920s, this legacy would profoundly shape the imagination of urban planners in Southern California. The garden city program offered the ideal way to fully establish the authority of regional planning in Los Angeles and to construct the region anew. Howard's utopia would at last allow the planners to rescue their patient and in the process make Los Angeles a (garden) city on a hill for twentieth-century urban America.

THE FUTURE GARDEN METROPOLIS

Los Angeles's planners were committed to the goal of freeing Los Angeles from its traditional concentric structure, and in the first thirty years of the twentieth century, the garden city seemed the only realistic way to accomplish this decentralization on a truly regional scale. The first loose association of Angelenos interested in planning called clearly, as far back as 1911, for de-emphasis of the central city in Southern California: "Bad living conditions can be remedied by scattering the population, by a proper distribution of factories, by ruralizing the city and urbanizing the country." The key to all this, they proclaimed in a printed report, was the provision of "industrial villages near factory locations" after the model of contemporary "English Town planning activity, . . . making the industrial village a garden city."[102] Such was the influence of Howard's thought that his envisioned topography stood alone as the only serious thoroughgoing model for planned urban deconcentration in this era.

Although they were seldom entirely explicit in their thinking, many of Southern California's planners gradually became outspoken advocates of radical decentralization. As these experts became more and more convinced through the course of the 1910s of the necessity of wide-ranging metropolitan decentralization, they became more and more fervent in their rejection of the dominant vision of urban modernity. By the 1920s, these professionals began to rail against continued concentration and congestion through frequent publications in planning journals and local newspapers. Likewise, in speeches before a variety of civic organizations, ranging from the influential City Club and various local women's clubs to the chamber

of commerce and meetings of the city council, this fairly cohesive cadre of planners outlined their vision of a future Los Angeles of relatively low-density developments arrayed around what some began calling as early as 1911 local "subcenters," which would rival—and eventually replace for most citizens—the singular central business district.[103]

Ultimately, planners hoped that the entire Southern California region could be developed by degrees into a more balanced, harmonious network of self-contained cities, looking to Los Angeles as a cultural resource and civic center, not as the area's exclusive industrial and commercial engine. This was an avowedly urban vision for Southern California but was animated by an entirely new interpretation of urban modernity. This future metropolis would offer all the cosmopolitanism and cultural amenities of the traditional concentric city without the density and congestion. Whereas the dominant model of the modern cosmopolis arrayed its resources vertically, this new form of urbanity would spread its population over a much greater horizontal expanse. This utopian greater Los Angeles of the future, then, would be dedicated to the harmonious and efficient neighborhood, not sacrificed to the all-consuming needs of the congested downtown district.

In retrospect, it is clear what garden city planning promised for Southern California planners, even if they never fully articulated their hopes. First, radical urban decentralization of an existing metropolis might be futuristic and ambitious, but it could be realized without wholesale urban reconstruction or radical incursions on ongoing development. With the wide sweep of land available in the Los Angeles basin, clusters of new garden cities might absorb the vast majority of the expected population influx. Such a plan seemed compatible with the rapid subdivision of land that was already engulfing the area. Decentralizing planners "reasoned that if the region's tracts were effectively regulated prior to development each new parcel would contribute to a more efficient metropolis, coherent community, and attractive landscape."[104] By regulating these new subdivisions and encouraging garden city type development, planners could fairly easily redirect existing trends of far-flung suburbanization toward the construction of autonomous new communities. As Fogelson observes, "[Planners] proposed an alternative of residential dispersal and business decentralization—carefully supervised so as to foster self-sufficient satellite cities instead of sprawling suburban subdivisions."[105] With a bit of careful advance planning, the entire urban network could be reshaped in this manner—long before it began to solidify. Because Los Angeles's core was such a small part of the larger region, there would be far less danger of the city dominating the urban fabric than in an already heavily developed urban region, such as New York or Chicago.

Obviously, given their analytical predilection for visibility, the orderliness of the garden city maps would particularly appeal to Southern Californian expert planners. Here was a deconcentrated form that was clearly manageable on a human scale.

The eye could take in the city at a glance (or at least the diagrams) and make perfect sense of what was seen. Disciplinary reliance on survey and map predisposed Los Angeles planners toward Howard's diagrams. They made a great deal of sense within the system of logic structuring planners' views of the city: the vision was already translated into terms planners could understand and digest. It was extremely legible to them and eminently comprehensible—both in detail and as a whole. Furthermore, this scheme fit planners' priorities for their region. It promised to preserve, in lush greenbelts, much of the bucolic appeal of 1920 Los Angeles, and it offered a way to structure the gradual growth of the vast basin. The fact that the plan was self-contained without relying on concentric growth was a further enticement of the garden city model. Instead of a single circular urban structure arrayed about a central congested core, this map betokened an orderly clustered landscape of walking-scale communities, each properly discrete and well segregated, without chaotic layer upon layer of ever-denser development. Compared to any survey of contemporary Southern California in this period, the advantages of the garden city diagram were clear. The future Los Angeles promised to be equally legible. Chaotic congestion—both of people and of traffic—would diminish without degrading urban comprehensibility. Homogeneous, tight-knit, properly segregated neighborhoods would become the basis of the metropolitan district. Within each community, as within the greater clustered whole, clear lines and hierarchies would be visible to everyone. Cosmopolitanism would not require chaotic and unplanned social mixing. The garden city cluster, essentially a collection of small towns, promised a social order clearly legible to all, as in the small town of the era.

And what was the critical, indispensable element of this decentralization planning? Ironically, it was the very cause of the downtown traffic crises of the early 1920s: the private automobile. The car was the linchpin of the entire garden city aspiration. Fortuitously, the abundance of automobiles that presently clogged the metropolis's arteries would be central to its salvation. Here, the planners' jurisdiction over the street grid would prove crucial. Whereas many historians have bemoaned the fact that local planners were "forced" to cope with the minutiae of urban traffic regulation, the planners themselves most likely considered the growing demand for traffic relief as a welcome sign that the citizenry was beginning to recognize the need for planning solutions to the problems of the congested metropolis (see figure 9).

More directly, domain over the streets was one of the few direct powers planners had at this time, and certainly the most promising. Ideally, their authority over street platting would allow them to map out the future shape of the metropolis, at least in outline. Control over the street system—combined with techniques to fully comprehend and envision the region's development—would allow planners to construct their urban utopia from behind the scenes and within their still limited powers. After all, their vision of garden city decentralization could not realistically contemplate the public ownership of all land, as Howard's did. Instead, planners would

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A Good Argument for a City Planning Commission

FIGURE 9. Cover of the Progressive *California Outlook* 16, no. 14 (18 April 1914).

have to guide the growth of the region by the arts of encouragement, description, and—most practically—dominion over the skeletal infrastructure of public streets. With a few minor incentives, industry could be encouraged to locate outside of the built-up city, paralleling the ongoing residential subdivisions as they spread across the region, clinging to new networks of roads, sewers, and other utilities.

Private developers and subdividers would continue to do the actual work of buying and selling land, designing and marketing individual projects. The rational material decisions of these many private entrepreneurs, though, would be guided by the invisible hand of the planner's infrastructural design, arraying themselves almost naturally along the lines defined by carefully crafted building codes and regulations. Over time, instead of traditional dependent suburbia, autonomous garden cities would gradually evolve, as if by nature. Finally, completing the circle, this geographical fragmentation, instead of posing a threat to the circulatory health of the metropolis, would relieve a considerable amount of the existing pressure. The traffic woes of the concentric metropolis—which were, of course, underwriting all this radical change—would simply fade away.[106]

For planners in Los Angeles, ultimately, the route to radical urban restructuring on the model of Ebenezer Howard's garden city ideal lay in the pragmatic, technical details of the urban street system, and the vehicle for their ambitions was the transmission of Angelenos' growing concern about traffic. Over the next few years, though, these experts would find their control over that street grid and its jumble of private automobiles to be much more tenuous and uncertain than they had assumed. Indeed, in the 1920s these experts would find that public reaction to the chaos on the city's streets would exert its own influence over the shape of the metropolis to come, complicating the professionals' aspiration to "Dream dreams and see Visions" of "the better city" to come.