

Project Restore
CIVIC CROSSROADS PLAN



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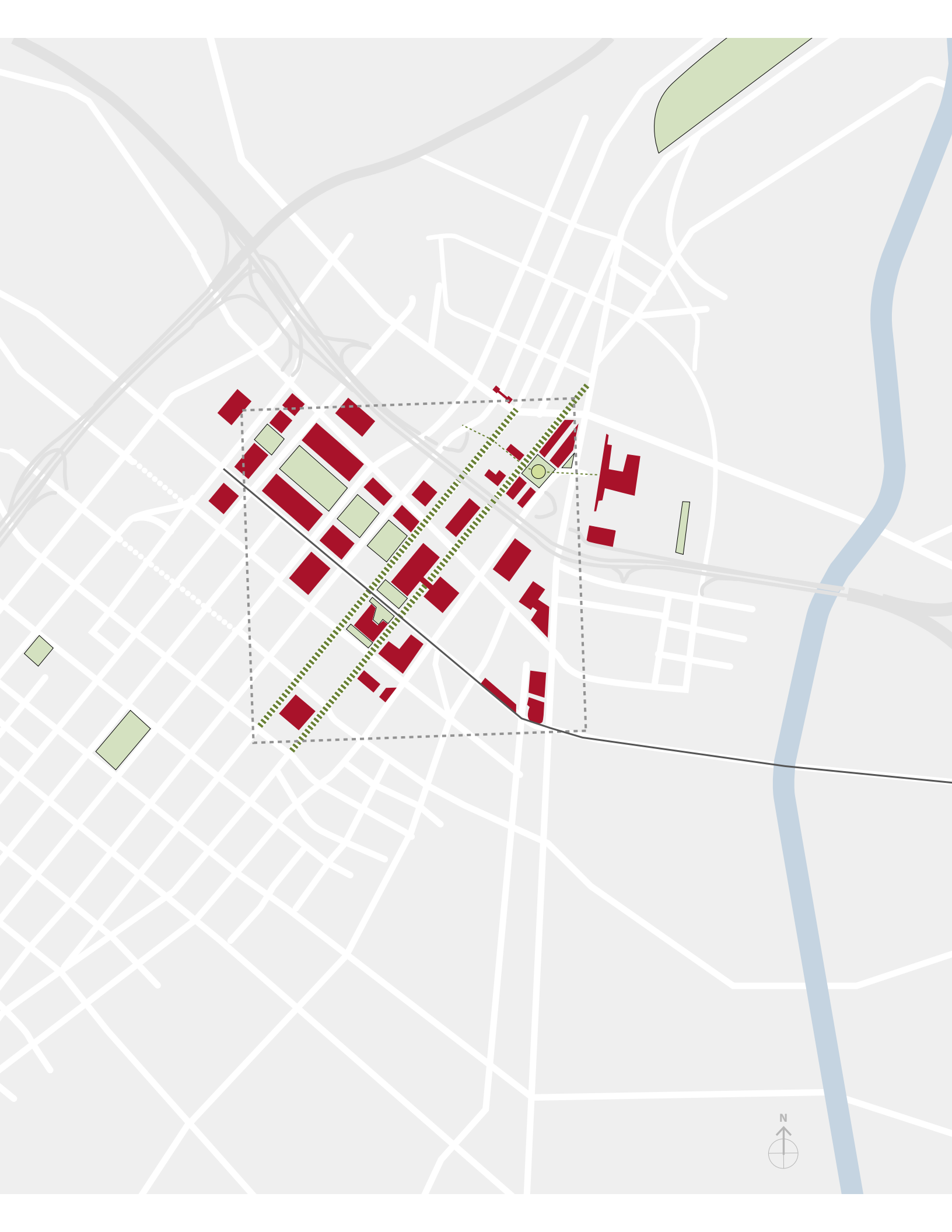
Consultants

S U I S M A N • C A M P B E L L • R I O S
Suisman Urban Design • Campbell & Campbell • Rios Clementi Hale Studios



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Introduction

Project Restore’s Civic Crossroads project is a planning and design initiative focusing on the linked cores of the Los Angeles Civic Center and El Pueblo de Los Angeles. Following the completion of the First Now! study which focused on First Street running west to east from Bunker Hill to Boyle Heights, the Civic Crossroads project centers on City Hall and the two north-south streets which bracket it: Main and Spring. Starting from the Historic Core on the south and running up to César Chavez Boulevard to El Pueblo and Chinatown on the north, Main and Spring are of vital importance in connecting the Historic Core to the historic El Pueblo district. And where they cross First Street and the new Civic Park from Bunker Hill, a true Civic Crossroads stands ready to emerge.

The goal of the project is to identify key opportunities and projects which relate to existing or planned development projects and initiatives. These include the Grand Avenue project, with its 16-acre Civic Park running to City Hall’s front door; the new Police Headquarters and neighborhood park; the proposed upgrading of the Los Angeles Mall; the restoration of the Hall of Justice; and the new La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, a county-wide cultural center now under construction in historic buildings across from the original Plaza of Los Angeles. Beyond these specific projects, broader developments such as the extraordinary renaissance of downtown housing and the City Planning Department’s proposed streetscape standards for all of downtown set the stage for a new phase in the life of the Civic Center. Coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the Ten-Minute Diamond master plan for the Civic Center, the Civic Crossroads carries forward and synthesizes all these activities into a new vision for the civic heart of the city.

Civic Buildings and El Pueblo

Diagram showing the relationship of major Civic Center and El Pueblo buildings (red) to the Los Angeles River (blue line), the major freeways (gray lines), the downtown street grid (white lines), the “Ten-Minute Diamond” (dotted gray line), First Street (dark gray line), Main and Spring Streets (dashed green lines), and key parks and open spaces (green).



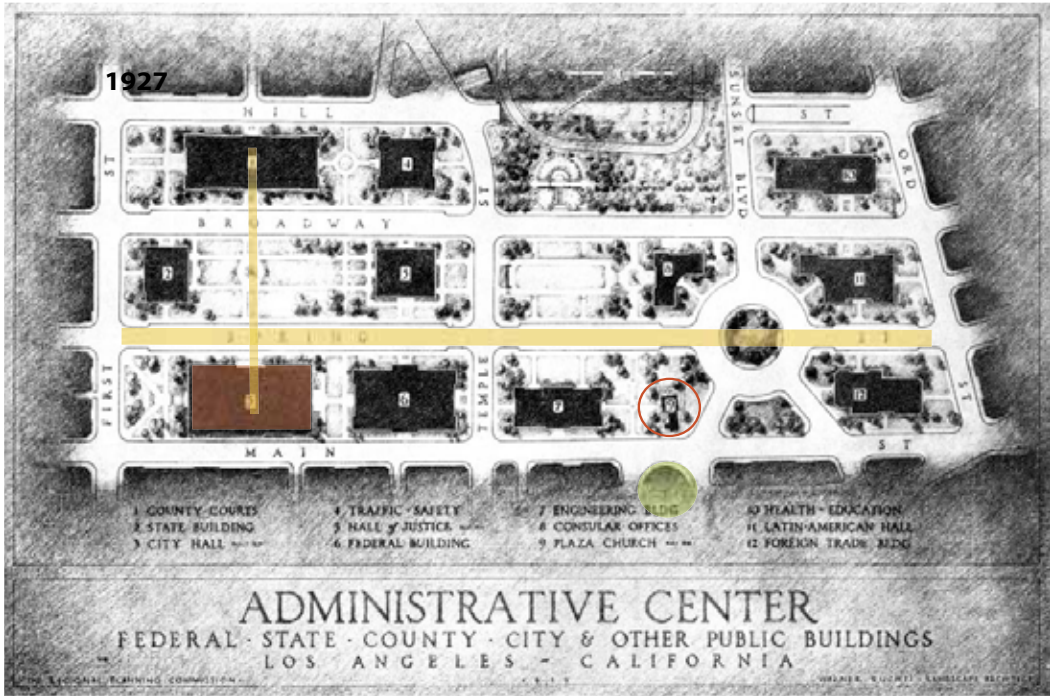
Civic Buildings and El Pueblo
1928 aerial view showing Spring Street (bottom right in blue) in front of the recently completed City Hall, with Spring terminating at Temple; the County Hall of Justice (center left) fronting Buena Vista Street and several blocks of dense commercial buildings later removed for the 101 freeway; and Main Street (top in blue) with its continuous edge of commercial buildings, hotels, theaters, shops, and housing running directly into the Plaza and "Sonoratown", as the Pueblo district was known at that time.



Civic Los Angeles:
The Pueblo, Civic Center, and Downtown:
Historical Background

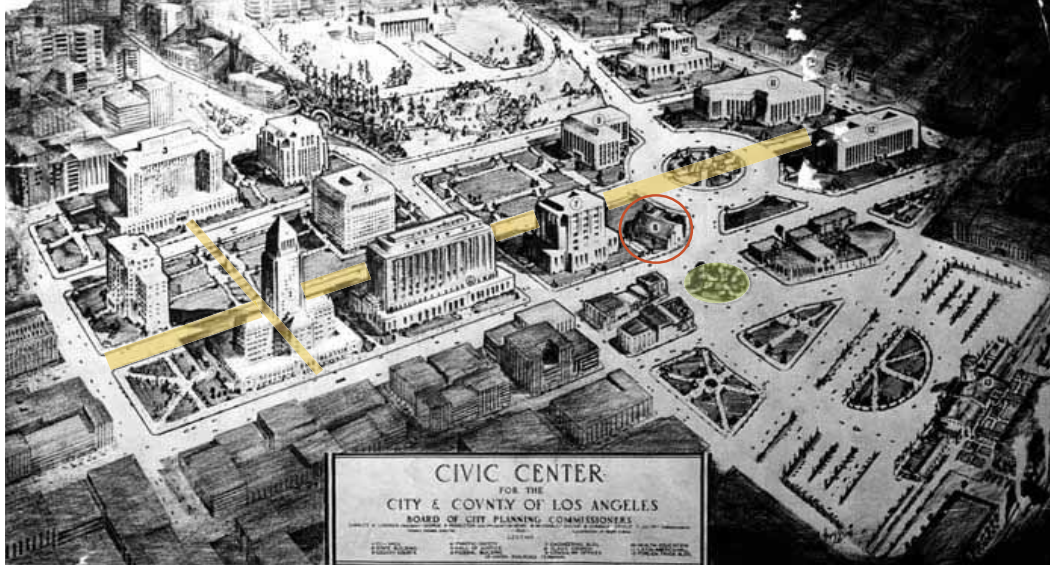
From its founding in 1785, the civic life of El Pueblo of Los Angeles was gathered around its central plaza. Religious, government and judicial functions were housed either facing the Plaza or within a short distance.

The pueblo's primary street was Main Street, which ran south from the Plaza along the narrow topographic shelf between the floodplain to the east and the hills to the west. When Los Angeles became an American city in 1848, civic functions began to migrate southwest from the Plaza along Main Street. In the 1850's, the newly formed County of Los Angeles established its first freestanding courthouse at the intersection of Spring and Main in a structure known as the Temple Block, just north of today's City Hall. In the 1880's the City moved its headquarters even further south, building a massive Romanesque city hall between First and Second Streets, and two blocks west of Main on Broadway. In the 1890's the County built another massive structure, an enlarged County Courthouse, which also faced Broadway just south of Temple Street. This southwestern migration finally ended in the 1920's when the City opted to head back northwest and locate its new City Hall between



The First Adopted Plan

After a 1923 design competition, the City and County issued this official plan in 1927 for an “Administrative Center” to house their buildings and those of the State and Federal governments; the plan would have established a primary axis (bold yellow line) along Spring Street running as far north as Ord Street in today’s Chinatown, with a vast landscaped traffic circle straddling Sunset Boulevard. The Plaza Church, the city’s oldest (circled in red), is transformed from an urban church into an isolated monument in a park.



The Plan is Updated

In 1933 the City and County issued this revised aerial view of what was now called a “Civic Center”. The new United States Post Office and Courthouse is shown (too closely) north of City Hall, and Union Station is indicated with its vast parking lots east of Alameda (lower right). Note the density of housing on Bunker Hill (upper left corner), and the continuous commercial buildings along Main Street (bottom center and left).



Spring Street Breaks Through to Sunset Boulevard

In the mid-1930’s, major earthworks chipped away at the eastern slopes of Fort Moore Hill, clearing the path for Spring Street’s northerly extension (pale yellow). Numerous buildings were demolished for the project. Note New High Street running almost parallel to Spring (near bottom), Sunset’s alignment directly into the Plaza (bottom right), and the mouth of the Broadway Tunnel (center right).

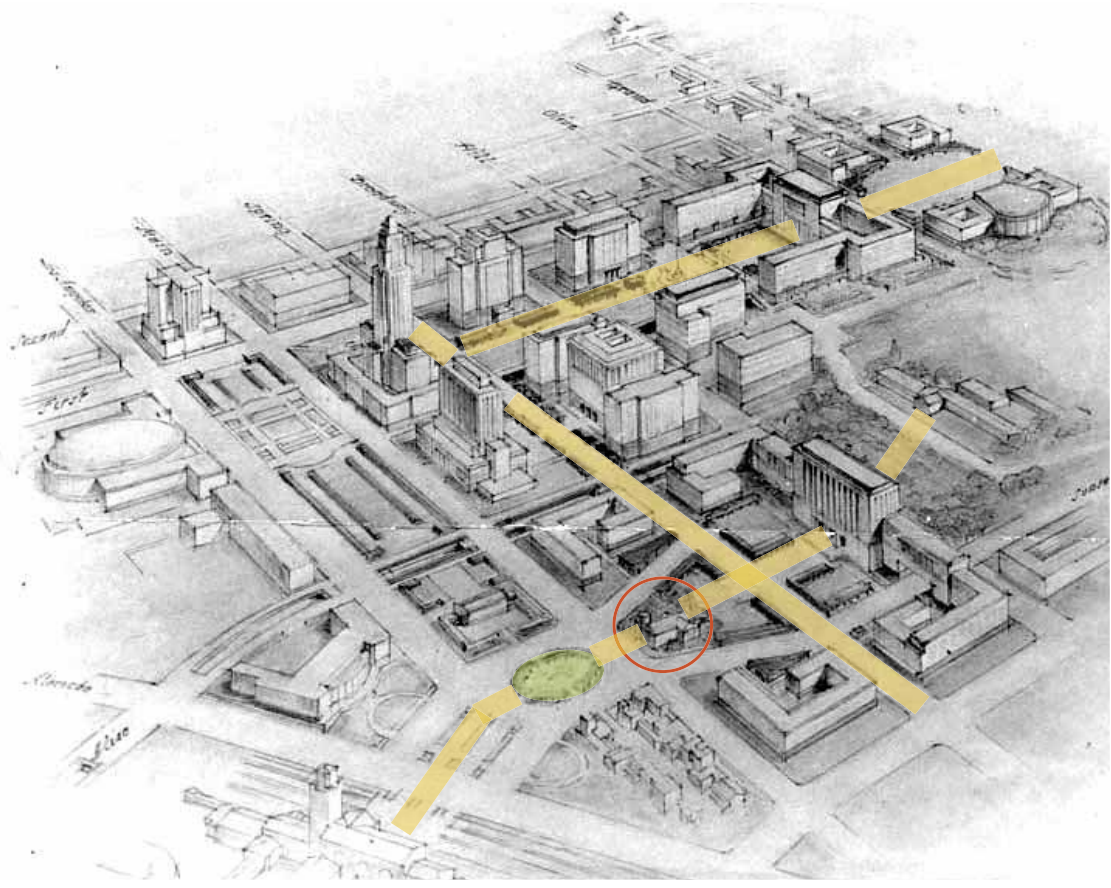
First Street and Temple, and Spring and Main. This decisive move locked in the pivot point of civic and governmental activity for the next 100 years, up to the present day and for the foreseeable future.

As the city and county grew explosively in the 1920's, so did the size of government and administrative functions. Over a period of 30 years, from around 1920 to 1950, the City and County tried repeatedly to fix a location and organizing principle for a new shared Civic Center to house their growing roster of departments and agencies.

During this period two competing ideas emerged for organizing the planned Civic Center, both of them influenced by the reigning "City Beautiful" movement in American urban planning. One was to extend Spring Street north by several blocks past its terminus at Temple Street, penetrating directly into the old Pueblo area (then called "Sonoratown") and establishing an axis for an array of civic and government buildings on either side. This would require the demolition of many existing streets and buildings, as well as part of the eastern slopes of Fort Moore Hill. The boundaries of the Civic Center would be formed by Broadway on the west and Main Street on the east.

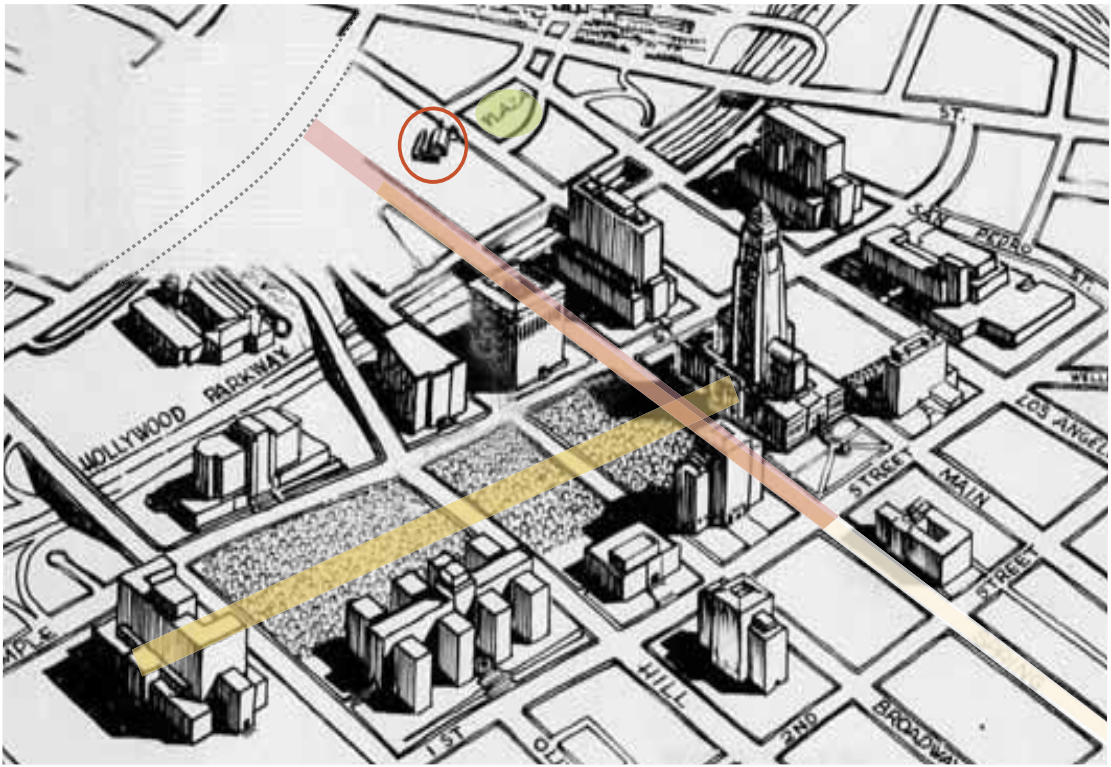
The second and more ambitious idea was to create a new monumental axis running west from City Hall, up the slopes of Bunker Hill, with a vast esplanade on the crown of the hill. This would require even more extensive earthmoving and demolition, as the axis would have to rise more than 100 feet from east to west, through densely populated neighborhoods. First Street would form the southern boundary of the Civic Center, with Temple, or even Sunset forming the northern edge.

Following the first visual articulation of these two ideas in 1922, the Spring Street option was officially adopted in 1928. As a result, the County began acquiring large amounts of land in the Pueblo area at the north end of the still imaginary axis (the City was already ensconced at the southern end). In the



A Portent of the Future

In 1938 this aerial view depicted several significant developments. A monumental County complex (center right) is shown behind the Plaza Church (red circle), on axis with the Plaza (green); a grade-separated roadway is indicated in the alignment which would later become the 101 Freeway (center); the Spring Street axis is paralleled by a vast esplanade from the Plaza south to First, between Main and Los Angeles Streets, later the site of the Los Angeles Mall (center left); and a monumental axis is shown running west up Bunker Hill, passing a u-shaped building where the County Courthouse and Hall of Administration stand today, and arriving at a plaza precisely in the location of the current Music Center plaza (upper right).



A Change of Course

This 1951 rendering shows the trench of the "Hollywood Parkway" effectively cutting the Civic Center off from the Pueblo District (Plaza Church in red circle and the Plaza in green). The freeway effectively killed the concept of a civic axis along Spring Street (pink). Instead the new and singular axis ran westward up Bunker Hill (yellow). This ambitious and costly strategy had first been proposed in 1923 by Allied Architects, and was revived in the 1938 drawing above. The scheme at left incorrectly anticipated that civic buildings would be built north of Temple Street, facing a large park, and that the terminating building of the axis (lower left corner) would sit where the Music Center plaza sits today, along Grand Avenue. Instead, the axis was terminated by the DWP building located a full block west, on the far side of Hope Street.

mid-1930's, a location was finally selected for the long planned Union Station rail terminal. The selection - on the western side of Alameda Street in the Pueblo - hastened the planned extension of Spring Street northward. The station site lay low in the riverbed, so it had to be raised to the level of the existing tracks. The removal of the western slope of Fort Moore Hill, which stood in the way of Spring Street's extension, would kill two birds with one stone, not only clearing Spring Street's path for the Civic Center, but also providing millions of cubic feet of soil to raise the Union Station site. Photos show this excavation work being carried out in the mid-1930's. By 1938, Union Station was open, and the Spring Street axis was ready for its Civic Center.

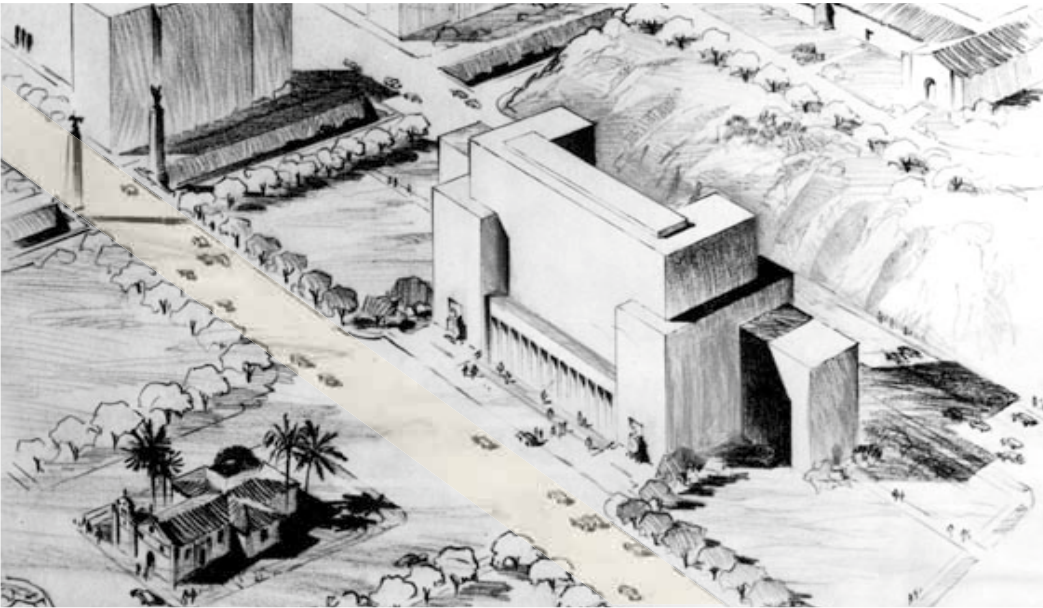
Despite these advances, the proponents of the Bunker Hill option continued to float alternative plans during the 1930's and 40's, some of them incorporating *both* the Spring Street and Bunker Hill axes. Changes in urban transportation began to tip the balance their way. By the late 1940's, the growing number of automobiles and associated traffic had led to the planning of the freeway system, including a key link between downtown to Hollywood. This segment was to be located in an east-west trench that would decisively separate El Pueblo from the existing cluster of civic buildings around City Hall. In this scenario, the middle section of the monumental Spring Street axis would be reduced to a freeway overpass. The concept of extending the Civic Center northward began to lose favor among officials and city leaders, a trend possibly strengthened by a number of social conflicts and problems associated with El Pueblo. By 1951 an official aerial rendering of a new Civic Center with its buildings marching not northward but westward up Bunker Hill - parallel to the freeway trench labeled "Hollywood Parkway" - confirmed the final abandonment of Spring Street as the civic spine.

What followed along that westward spine up Bunker Hill were twenty years of sustained demolition of existing structures and neighborhoods, regrading of the unstable slopes, and construction of massive new public buildings. The completion



Bunker Hill Dominates

By the mid-1970's the vision of an integrated civic and cultural center running west from City Hall was still far from complete. Several historic structures still stood west of City Hall (upper right corner) and the space between the two County buildings was still devoted to parking. North of Temple Street and the freeway, acres of land were cleared of building and devoted to surface parking lots (upper left). Only fragments of El Pueblo remained (top center).



Last Gasp of the Spring Street Civic Center

A 1946 drawing shows a massive County courthouse at the foot of Fort Moore Hill, directly behind the plaza church. The site used to be steeply sloped before excavation; today it is a surface parking lot (see photo below left). Note the pair of monumental pylons on the bridge across the sunken roadway (today the 101 freeway).



The County's Land Bank

In anticipation of the Spring Street Civic Center, the County acquired large land parcels in the Pueblo during the 1920's and 30's. In this photo from the 1950's the parcels are used mostly for surface parking, as they still are today. The new Mexican-American cultural center, La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, will occupy the County parcels adjacent to the Plaza Church (upper right).

of the twin County buildings and the Department of Water and Power building in the 1960's was then crowned with the opening of the Los Angeles County Music Center in the 1970s. In place of the long-standing vision of a Civic Center which would have dramatically reshaped the entire historic Pueblo district, the City and County instead moved west and planted their flags on top of Bunker Hill.

In the wake of this change of direction, all previous plans for government buildings in the Pueblo area were dropped -- the last gasp may have been a belated 1946 proposal for a monumental County Courthouse directly behind the Plaza Church. North Spring Street, once envisioned as a boulevard of grand civic buildings, was reduced to an access road for the County's acres of excavated land, now paved over for parking lots.

Along Main Street and in El Pueblo throughout this period, the construction of the freeway, with its service roads and ramps and associated street widenings and relocations, led to the wholesale demolition of individual historic structures and entire city blocks. Disinvestment in the area was exacerbated by the downturn in passenger rail service (in favor of the private automobile and commercial aviation) which lowered activity and land values around Union Station. With the few remaining structures on Main Street and in El Pueblo themselves threatened, there was little left to do but declare the survivors a collective "historic monument" and protect them as relics in a state historic "park".

Today, the segment of Main Street from City Hall to the Plaza reveals little of the dense and continuous urban fabric - or the associated vitality - which used to line it. Only where Pico House faces the Plaza House is there an indication of the scale and character that had evolved - and persisted - over a period of more than 170 years. Yet Main Street itself, as an uninterrupted path and as an urban idea, still exists. This study sets a high priority on improving the qualities - historical, architectural, experiential - of this landmark street, which is so deeply rooted in the civic life of Los Angeles.



Main Street as Continuous Urban Fabric

This 1920's view shows the block from Aliso Street all the way to Pico House at the corner of the Plaza. The urban liveliness of mixed uses, now a tenet of contemporary downtown planning, is visible in the shops, offices, and housing which lined the street.



A District Becomes an Island

By 1970, the remaining fragments of El Pueblo district and Main Street, were isolated from the rest of the city by a sea of asphalt and concrete roadways, ramps, and parking lots.



North Spring and North Main Today

Engineered primarily for freeway access, both streets create an experience for pedestrians which make the Civic Center and the Pueblo seem further apart than they actually are. As Chinatown and El Pueblo revitalize, and residential neighborhoods around the Civic Center gain strength, improving the vitality and walkability of Spring and Main will become high priorities.

Spring Street north of Temple, as we have seen, did not even exist as a roadway until the mid-1930's. And when it was finally constructed, its form was determined by the narrow concerns of traffic engineering, with little regard for the streets, buildings, trees, natural topography, or cultural landmarks that were inevitably erased. The sad irony is that by the time this long-planned and destructive extension was realized, its original purpose - providing a beautiful and monumental axis for civic buildings - had given way to the imperative of delivering commuters to their freeway on-ramps. As a result, North Spring Street today is effectively a street without an identity -- all path and no place. Envisioning such an identity is a key goal of this study.

A compact, triangular city center...



1888



1894



1906



The city's densest and most historic district...

...is split in two and exploded in scale.



1929



1950



2007

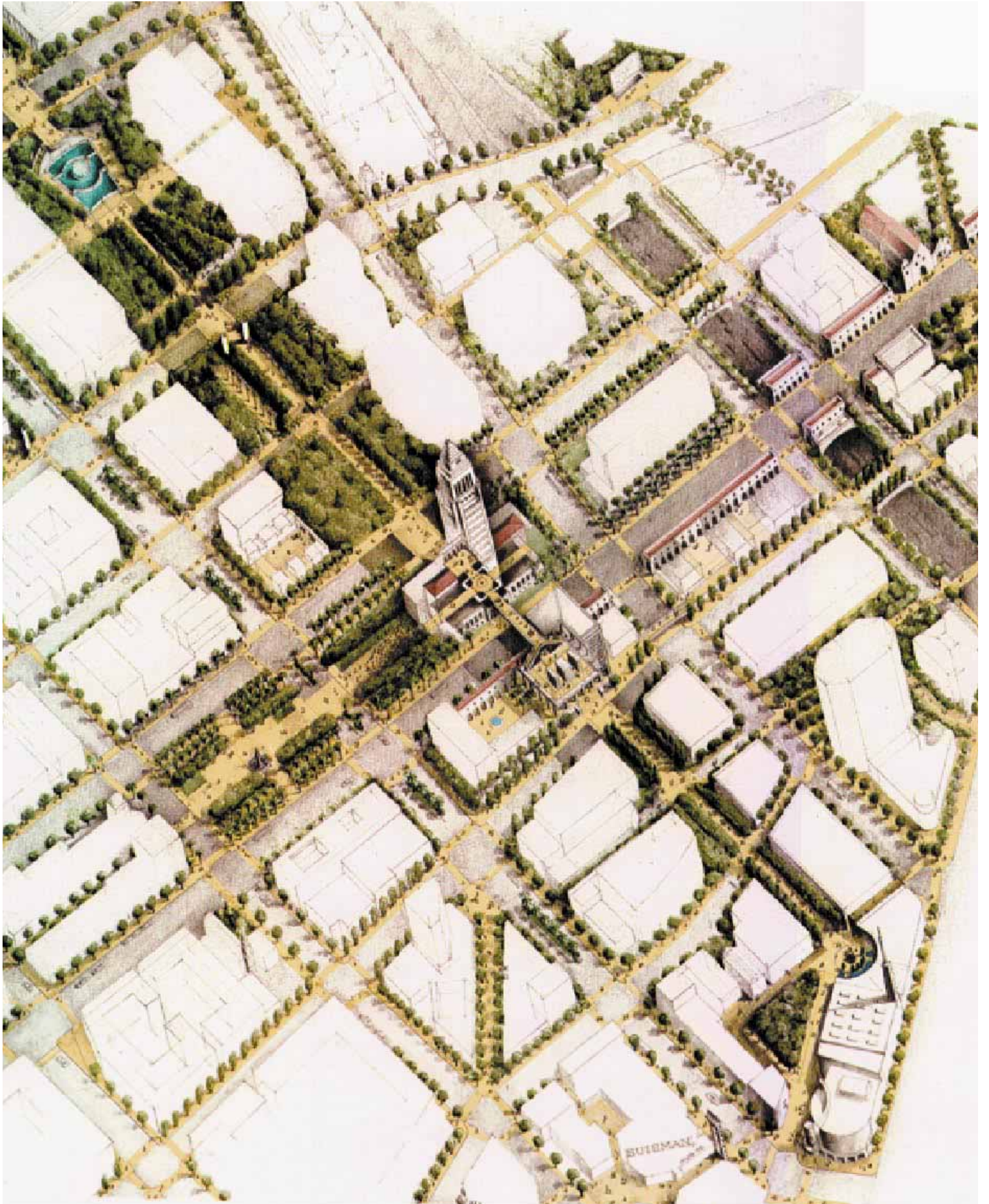


...is demolished, leaving only fragments behind.



Evolution of the Urban Pattern

This sequence of Sanborn Insurance maps shows the evolution of downtown Los Angeles from 1888 to the present. The top sequence shows the city's evolution from a triangular wedge of dense buildings, hemmed in by the flood plain of the Los Angeles river to the east, and the steep, unstable hills to the west, into a bifurcated district: the Hollywood Freeway divides the monumental Civic Center from the fragments of El Pueblo. The bottom sequence shows the progressive demolition of the buildings, blocks and streets of El Pueblo, leaving only the fragments found today.



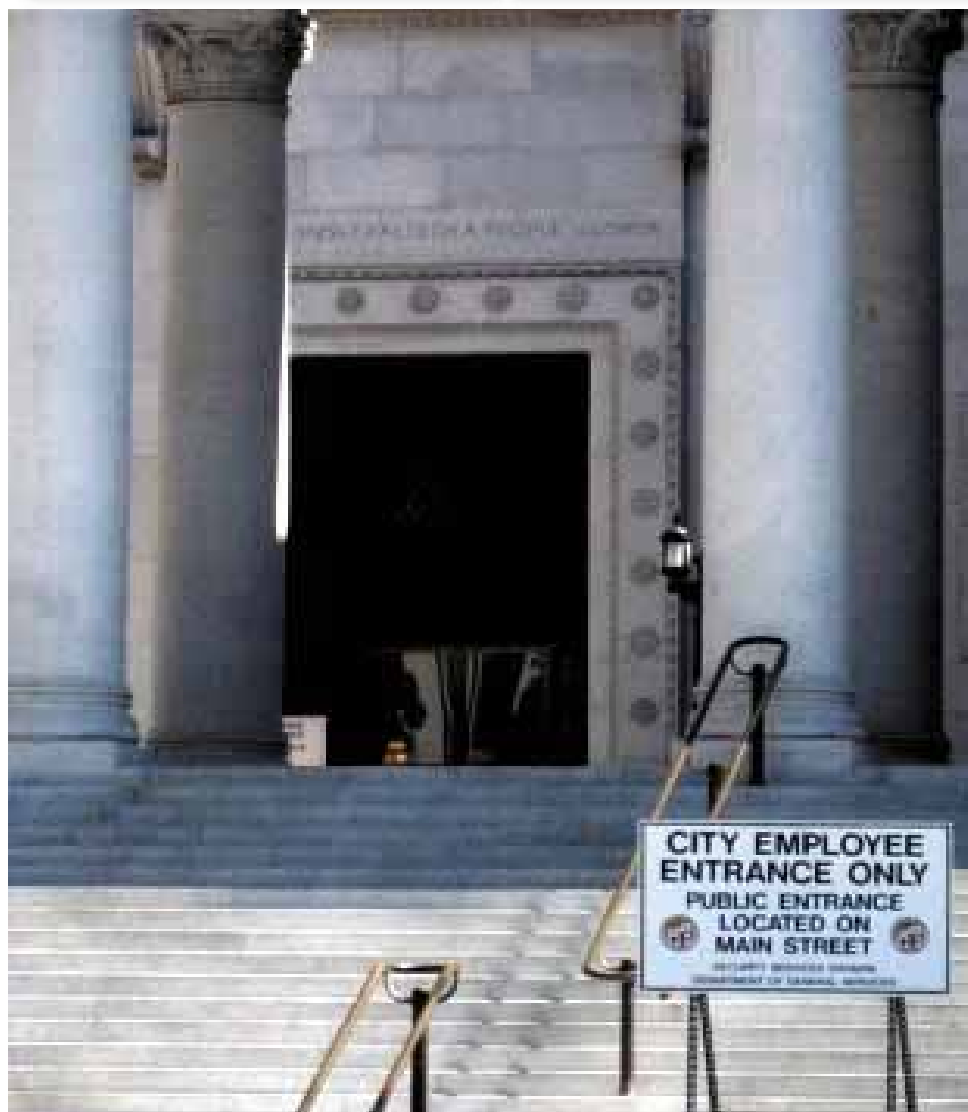
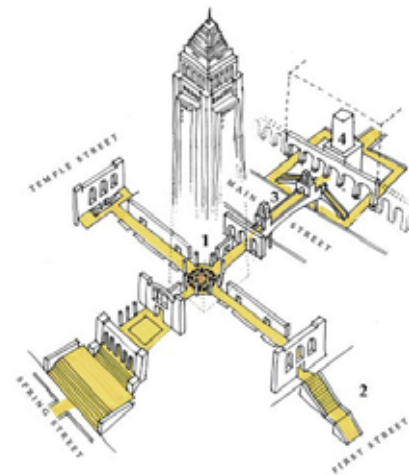
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Current Factors in Planning the Civic Center Area

The last comprehensive planning and design effort related to the Civic Center and vicinity, including El Pueblo, Spring Street and Main Street, was the plan known as “The Ten-Minute Diamond”. Officially titled the “Civic Center Shared Facilities and Enhancement Plan”, it was prepared from 1995-1996 under the auspices of the Los Angeles Civic Center Authority, a specially created entity jointly chaired by the City and County of Los Angeles, with representation from the Federal Government, the State of California, and all other affected government entities and stakeholders. The Ten-Minute Diamond plan was adopted by the Los Angeles City Council in 1997.

Many of the predicted developments in the plan have come to pass, and a number of its recommendations have been implemented. However, in the intervening decade, a range of new circumstances affecting the Civic Center and adjacent districts suggest the need to revisit aspects of the Ten-Minute Diamond and make appropriate adjustments. While the Civic Crossroads project is not intended as a comprehensive review or revision, its focus on the core of the Civic Center and two of its key streets does provide an important opportunity to assess those changed circumstances which are relevant to planning and design efforts in 2008.

Aerial rendering of the 1997 “Ten-Minute Diamond” plan for enhancing the Civic Center and sharing facilities among different government agencies



City Hall as Centerpiece and Crossroads

The Diamond plan set the boundaries of the Civic Center based on a ten-minute walk from the rotunda of City Hall (far left); the buildings two main corridors were conceived as interior streets which created a public crossroads for pedestrians at the rotunda, directly below the landmark tower (left).

City Hall as Security Zone

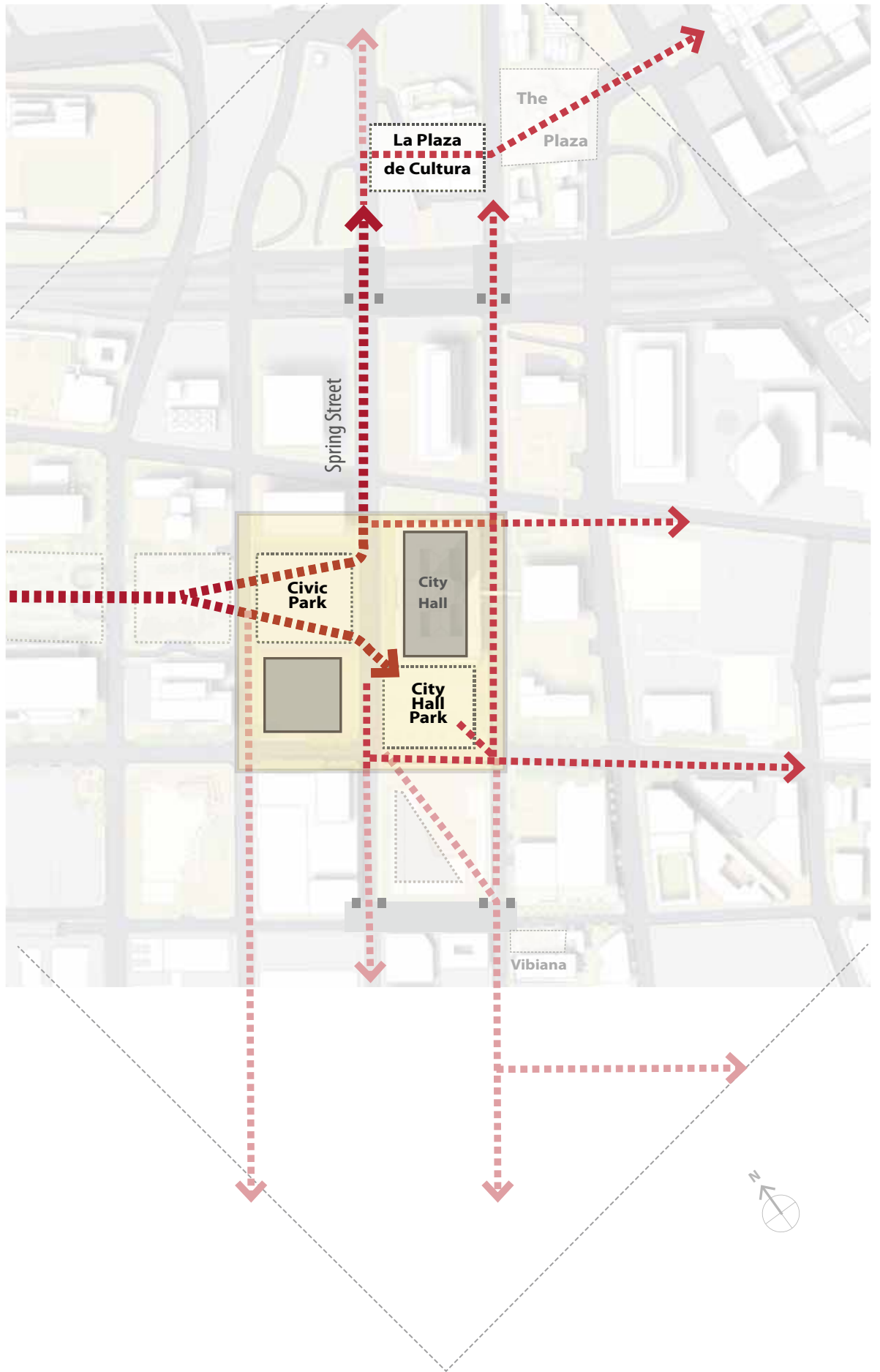
Because of post-9/11 security requirements, City Hall's primary entrance on Spring Street has been closed to the general public.

1. Heightened Security After 9/11

The title of the Ten-Minute Diamond referred to a new Civic Center boundary based on a ten-minute walking distance from the monumental interior rotunda of City Hall. The plan thus conceptually centered the entire Civic Center district on the rotunda and, by extension, on the landmark City Hall tower which rises directly above the rotunda. This centering was explicit in the plan, which treated the block-long hallways of City Hall as indoor streets whose intersection at the rotunda created a kind of civic crossroads. Indeed all pedestrians - whether officials, tourists, government employee, private citizens or schoolchildren - were expected to be able to use the internal streets to pass from one part of the Civic Center to another, creating a lively public environment. Especially along the building's axis from Spring Street to Main Street, City Hall was seen as providing a convenient through route from the Music Center and County buildings on the west to the City and Federal buildings and Little Tokyo district on the east.

The Ten-Minute Diamond was developed in an optimistic era when threats to American security seemed remote. The subsequent attacks in September 2001, and the changing international circumstances surrounding them, have made such a scenario of open public buildings unlikely for years to come, perhaps for a generation or more. That City Hall is less of a crossroads than it was is evidenced by a sign on the monumental Spring Street steps which announces a prohibition on anyone but City employees with identification cards from using the building's main entrance. City Hall's artfully designed entry sequence of broad staircase, grand portico and massive bronze doors -- all leading to the "crossroads" at the ornately tiled and decorated rotunda -- has effectively been shut down to the general public. Instead, the main public entrance, now equipped with security screening machines, has been indefinitely relocated to the building's basement-level back door on Main Street.

This unfortunate but apparently necessary transformation of the structure of City Hall from an open pedestrian crossroads



Getting Around City Hall

The conception of City Hall as an open pedestrian street from east to west is unlikely to be realized in the foreseeable future because of the new security environment. Longer-distance east-west pedestrian movement can be accommodated through the Plaza, along Temple Street, and along First Street

to a closed security barrier requires a rethinking of the larger patterns of pedestrian circulation in the Civic Center. The change happens to coincide with a southward shift of civic and governmental functions towards First Street, including the new Caltrans and Police buildings and the planned Federal Courthouse at Broadway. This suggests that, with east-west pedestrian flow blocked at City Hall, it could be diverted southward in a well-planned way towards City Hall Park and First Street and then eastward towards Little Tokyo; north and then eastward along Temple Street towards the Federal complex; or northward towards the new La Plaza de Cultura y Artes complex in El Pueblo, from which eastbound movement could continue towards Union Station. Main Street and Spring Street would have key roles to play in supporting these alternative routes for pedestrians.

2. Changing Demand for Civic Gathering Space

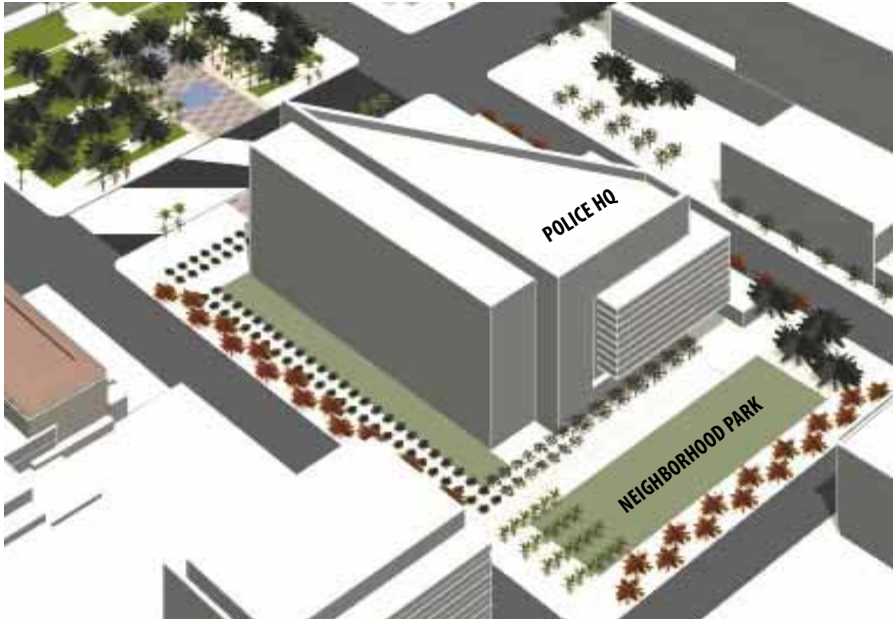
Another key feature of the Ten-Minute Diamond plan was the provision of a large public gathering space on the south side of City Hall. The plan called for extending the existing "City Hall Park" - a lawn area directly adjacent to the building's south facade and terrace - to connect with a proposed 3-acre "Civic Square" occupying the entire city block from First to Second and Spring to Main. The plan called for continuing to use the south lawn for such events as press conferences, ceremonies, and inaugurations; but for exceptionally large events like presidential visits, First Street could be closed, and the enlarged civic space would then extend all the way from City Hall south to Second Street.

The subsequent decision in 2004 to locate the city's new police headquarters on the same block which had been conceived as the Civic Square prompted some protests from those who, for a variety of reasons, had come to count on the eventual construction of the square. With the help of Project Restore's design team - then working on the First Now! plan for First Street - a compromise was crafted in which the southern side of the headquarters was designed as a public neighborhood park;



A Civic Square Not To Be

The Diamond plan called for a new Civic Square on the city block between First and Second Streets, which would function as a major gathering space and a spatial extension of City Hall's south lawn.



Neighborhood Park Instead

The new police headquarters buildings, though surrounded by significant amounts of open space, including a neighborhood park along Second Street, foreclosed the option of a true Civic Square on that block.

South Lawn as Civic Square

Mayoral inaugurations and other large gatherings have traditionally taken place on the south lawn of City Hall, officially known as City Hall Park. This space could become a fully active Civic Square, as recommended in Project Restore's First Now! plan.

Larger Gatherings

Mass public gatherings, such as the immigration rally of 2006, show the need for careful planning for provision of public space capable of handling large crowds on occasion, while also contributing to a vibrant public realm on a daily basis.

the northern side was left fairly open as a potential complement to the south lawn; a through pedestrian route was established from northwest to southeast, passing directly under the new building; and two publicly accessible spaces -- a cafeteria and an auditorium, were incorporated into the street level public areas of the site. Despite its formidable security requirements and features, the new police headquarters should make some positive contributions to the public space of the Civic Center. But its city block almost certainly will not function as a civic square for large gatherings.

In response to the police headquarters decision, the Project Restore design team for the First Now! plan developed an alternative strategy of reconfiguring City Hall Park itself as a Civic Square, with better accommodation of gatherings, and the provision of lighting, seating, cafe, and other features to encourage a wide variety of public uses.

During this period, two specific events highlighted the ongoing challenge of accommodating large public gatherings, especially in the post-9/11 era. The first was the 2005 inauguration of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, which drew very large if not unprecedented crowds, and filled not only the south lawn but the surrounding sidewalks. Main Street and Spring Street were closed to traffic for the occasion. The second was an even larger event in which more than a million demonstrators gathered in 2006 in response to the renewed national debate on immigration. This event was reportedly the largest politically motivated gathering in the city's history. The crowds overwhelmed not only the south lawn but virtually all the streets surrounding City Hall. Clearly the need for civic space capable of accommodating the right of free association in a democratic society had become, if anything, even more imperative since 1997.

During the same period, plans advanced on the Grand Avenue project, whose key public component was only tangentially connected to Grand Avenue itself: the reconfiguration and extension of the existing but incomplete Civic Center mall into a "Civic Park" extending east from Grand Avenue to the



Spring Street steps of City Hall. The Ten-Minute Diamond had called for such a public space, although it had described and portrayed it as a “Civic Garden”, i.e. heavily planted and park-like, in contrast to the more open Civic Square. In the Diamond plan, the Civic Square was intended to handle large demonstrations, while the Civic Gardens would provide a more intimate sylvan setting, albeit capable of accommodating large numbers of visitors at any one time.

With the disappearance of the Civic Square concept south of City Hall, it became apparent that the Mall, once it was extended to City Hall, would likely have to take on the role of a major gathering space. Accordingly, the eastern block of the Civic Park, between Broadway and Spring, as of this writing, been conceived as a broad, open space capable of handling large crowds. Large demonstrations generally require a central point of focus - a reviewing stand or speakers’ platform. Officials and planners should anticipate that this focal point will sometimes be located on City Hall’s south terrace steps, as it is for inaugurations, and at other times on the steps of the west portico. In the latter case, very large crowds may well extend westward through the first and even second or third blocks of the Civic Park. In such circumstances, Spring Street and even Broadway may have to be closed, causing potentially significant disruption for the very large number of bus lines which use those streets. On the positive side, the relatively narrow width and rising elevation of the Civic Park offers the possibility of very good sight lines for large crowds trying to see a speaker on the steps of City Hall. In this arrangement, the Civic Park could function in a way similar to the National Mall in Washington (which some believe was the mall’s original inspiration in the 1960’s) during large demonstrations, particularly those near the steps of the Capitol or the Lincoln Memorial.

The Mall as a New Civic Park

The planned completion of the Civic Center Mall, reconceived as a new “Civic Park”, should have enormous benefits for the Civic Center. The design of the park, especially as it approaches Spring Street and City Hall, should be integrated with planning for the Civic Crossroads.

A key goal of the Civic Crossroads project is therefore to take all these factors into account and encourage the development of a joint City-County strategy and design for expandable civic space - a true Civic Crossroads - incorporating the new Police plaza, City Hall lawn, the Civic Park, and Broadway, Spring, Main, and First Streets.



County of
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
 718 KENNETH HUNN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
 121
 12/07

DAVID E. JANSSSEN
 Chief Administrative Officer

March 4, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair
 Supervisor Gloria Molina
 Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite
 Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
 Supervisor Michael D. Antonio





From: David E. Janssen
 Chief Administrative Officer

**QUARTERLY REPORT - THE LOS ANGELES
 THIRD QUARTER REPORT, FISCAL YEAR**

On September 2, 2003, your Board approved the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement between the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles to create The Los Angeles Development Corporation to provide for the development of certain property in downtown Los Angeles. As part of the Administrative Office to provide quarterly updates

Spring Street as the City/County Seam

Though abandoned in the early 1950's as the organizing axis for the Civic Center, Spring Street today is still the key threshold of City and County properties. Unless jointly planned and designed, the street will function more as a divide than as the center of a vibrant Civic Crossroads.

-  **City**
-  **County**
-  **State**
-  **Federal**

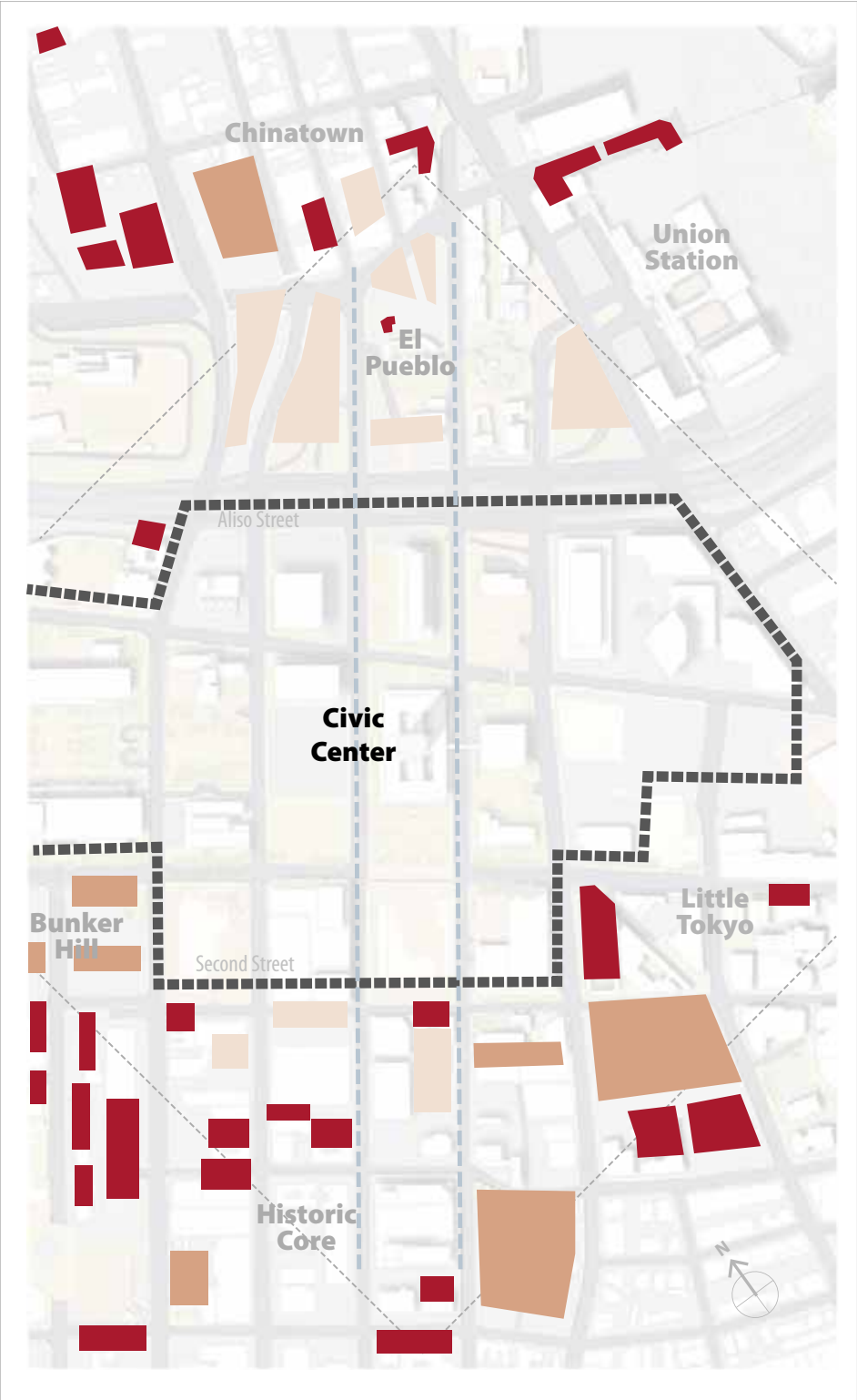
City/County Cooperation

The creation of the joint City-County Grand Avenue Authority (far left), and its stewardship of the planned Civic Park, provides an important precedent and model for City-County cooperation in envisioning the Civic Center for the coming decades.

3. Prospects for City/County Cooperation

The reconstituted Civic Center Authority which developed the Ten Minute Diamond plan represented a successful example of the City and County of Los Angeles cooperating on joint planning and design of the Civic Center area, where their interests and assets are closely located if not intertwined. One of the key recommendations of the Diamond plan was to extend the Civic Center Authority's work through the establishment of a permanent - and more fully empowered - "joint powers authority" for the Civic Center area. This recommendation was partly implemented with the creation of a new joint powers authority called the Grand Avenue Authority in 2001. While its brief does not cover all of the Civic Center, and its membership does not include other Civic Center stakeholders such as the State and Federal governments, it does continue the pattern of City and County cooperation. Though the focus of the Authority is mostly between Grand Avenue and Hill Streets, the inclusion of the Civic Park in its program means that the Authority's influence now extends eastward from Bunker Hill all the way to City Hall.

As noted in the two previous sections, joint planning is now more critical than ever to handle both security concerns and the accomodation of large public gatherings. There is also an equally important (if perhaps less urgent) imperative to improve the overall public environment throughout downtown, including the Civic Center (see next section). The issues affecting the evolution of the Civic Center are complex and interconnected. The City and the County are the two largest stakeholders in the Civic Center. Efforts to improve the public environment are far more likely to succeed if the City and County plan and design together. This is especially true along the axis of Spring Street, where the two blocs of City and County property meet.



Residential Neighborhoods Next to Government

Today's residential development adjacent to the Civic Center governmental core and within the Ten-Minute Diamond has far exceeded what planners anticipated in 1996 when the Diamond plan was completed.

Residential Sites
includes condominiums, apartments, lofts, hotels

- Existing or Under Construction
- Planned
- Potential

4. Downtown Residential Revival



A Housing Boom

A typical contemporary loft exemplifies the current housing boom in downtown Los Angeles.

At the time of the 1997 adoption of the Ten-Minute Diamond plan, there were only a handful of residential units - including hotel rooms - within the proposed ten-minute boundary of the Civic Center. Ten years later, the situation has changed dramatically. Downtown is experiencing a housing boom, with rapid growth of its residential population. The boom includes the conversion of early 20th century office buildings into apartments and lofts, the construction of new loft buildings, and the construction of high-rise rental apartments and condominiums. The market has moved increasingly towards the production of high-end and even luxury units; municipal policy and ordinances have assured a smaller percentage of the units are built and priced in the “affordable” range.

This boom has affected the Civic Center. The Diamond plan acknowledged that the square in the center of the diamond was dominated by large, single-purpose government buildings, and therefore sought to incorporate the more varied uses in the four triangles at the corners of the diamond: the Bunker Hill, Historic Core, Little Tokyo, and El Pueblo districts. The inclusion of these corner areas was intended to enrich the character of the Civic Center with shops, restaurants, museums, and performing arts venues, including MOCA, the Music Center, Disney Concert Hall, Colburn School, Vibiana Place, The Japanese-American National Museum, the Geffen Contemporary, Olvera Street, La Placita Church, and the Chinese-American Museum. Housing was noted as a potential ingredient, but the Diamond was envisioned primarily as a mix of civic, commercial, cultural and government uses.

The housing boom is forcing a shift in those assumptions. All four of the “corners” now have a significant number of new residential units either built, planned, or proposed. In effect, each of the corners is on the way to becoming a full-fledged residential neighborhood in its own right. This trend has been accompanied by the creation of neighborhood councils throughout Los Angeles, including downtown. The councils have given voice to concerns by new downtown residents about a range of quality of life issues, some of which concern Civic Center expansion into their districts. The opposition to the new police headquarters building and its associated



New Downtown Streetscape Standards

The City Planning Department's Urban Design Studio is developing streetscape standards for all of downtown which embody a more comprehensive approach to street design. Concerns for motorists and rush-hour traffic counts will be better balanced with the needs of pedestrians, transit users, merchants, and residents. Wider sidewalks, more shade trees, improved lighting, and safer crosswalks are among the key features.

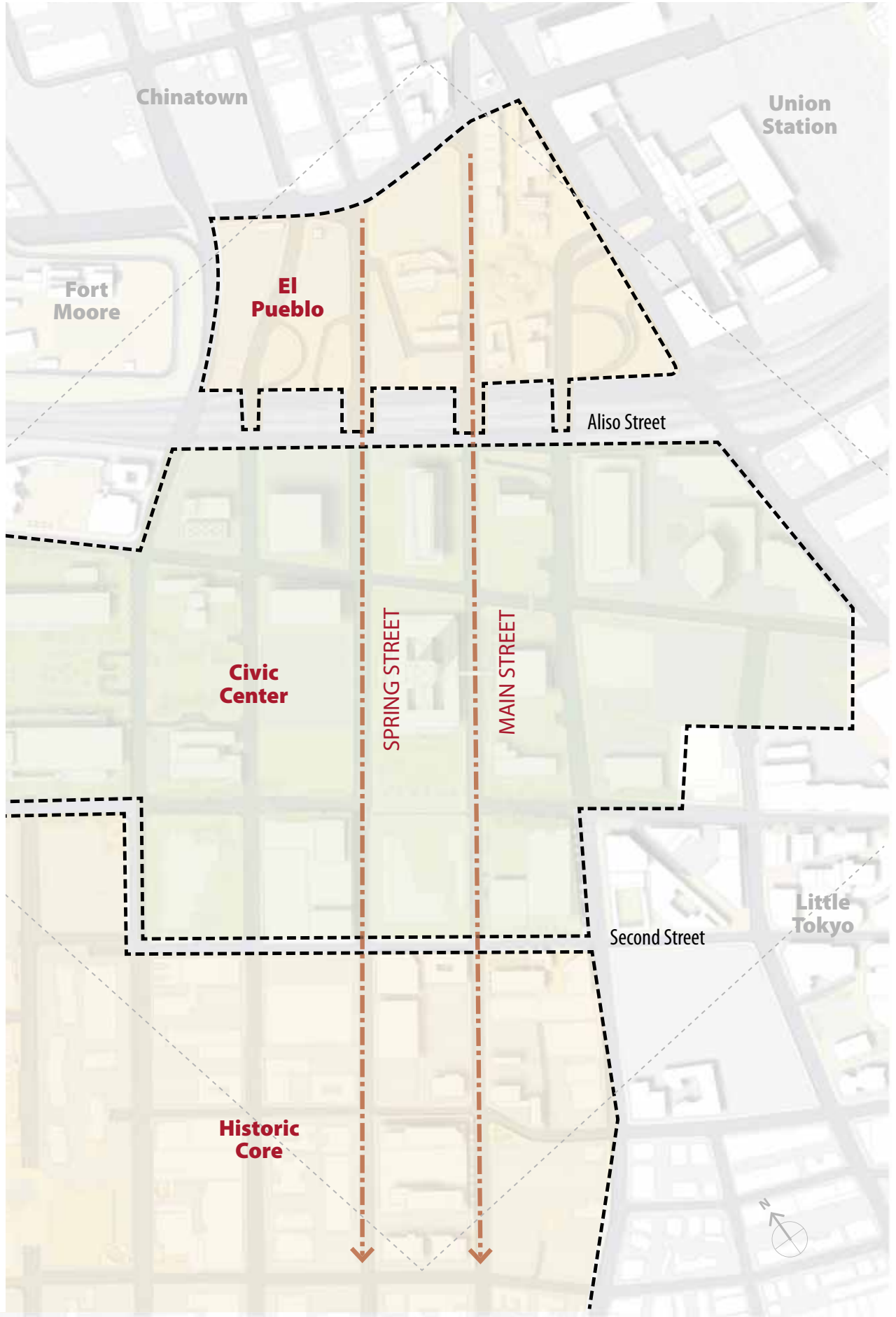


parking facilities, led in part by tenants in the renovated Higgins Building, adjacent to the proposed site, was only the most visible example of a potentially widening divide between the interests of local residents and government officials.

As residential uses press in on the Diamond from all four corners, the City and County will likely find it increasingly difficult to find new building sites within the desired ten-minute walking distance of City Hall. Government planners may be required to consider constructing taller, denser buildings on existing sites, reducing staff located within the Civic Center, and/or relocating some functions outside of the Civic Center core.

Beyond the fundamental struggle over the land use of specific parcels, the public character of the streets and open spaces of the Civic Center will also likely come under increasing scrutiny. The district's long-standing preponderance of government office buildings and courthouses - closed at nights and on weekends - produced only a weak constituency for an improved public realm. But the growing number of downtown residents, and the developers who wish to attract them, are well-positioned to influence policy, and are exerting increasing pressure on public agencies to reduce crime, add parks, tame traffic, and help attract urban amenities which improve the quality of residential life. A prime example is the current City Planning department initiative to revise the streetscape standards for virtually all of downtown's streets in ways that prioritize their attractiveness to pedestrians over their capacity to move automobile commuters...in other words, favoring wider and shadier sidewalks over wider and faster roadbeds.

These new standards will apply to the Civic Center as well. Beyond wider sidewalks, there will also be calls to enhance all of the Civic Center's public realm. Its open spaces, lawns, plazas, fountains, staircases, and terraces, not to mention its restaurants, shops and snackbars, will need to be upgraded from mere adornments to civic structures or amenities for government workers into an exceptionally attractive, continuous, and vibrant public environment - for residents, for workers, for visitors, during the day, at nights, and on weekends.



Chinatown

Union Station

Fort Moore

El Pueblo

Aliso Street

Civic Center

SPRING STREET

MAIN STREET

Little Tokyo

Second Street

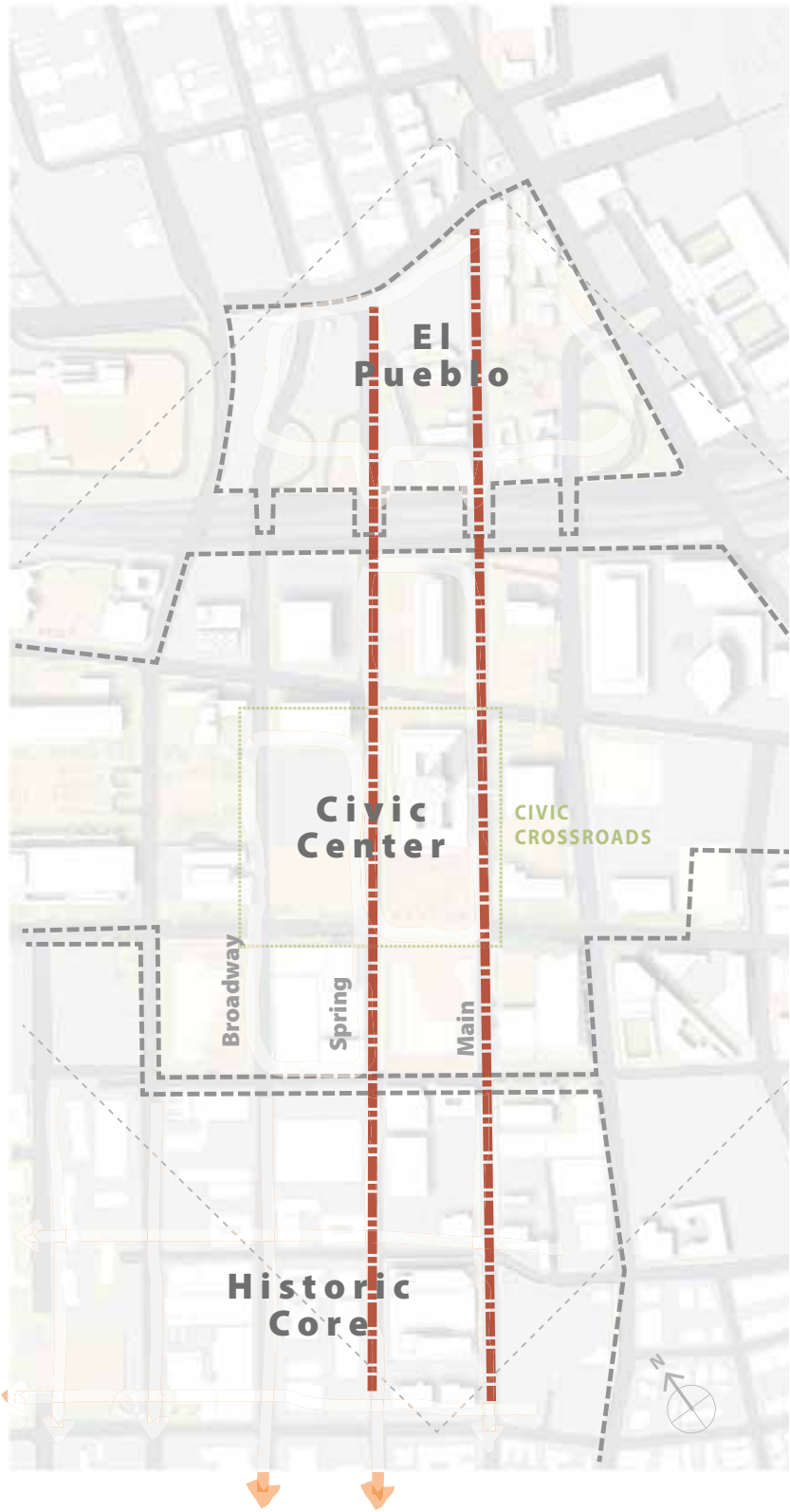
Historic Core



3

Strategies for Two Streets, Three Districts

Given these changed circumstances, and the need to reconcile government operations with residential demands for livability, this Civic Crossroads plan aims to provide an alternative to reaction on a case-by-case basis. Instead we hope to suggest both broad strategies and specific projects, based on a vision of a large and historic government center harmoniously integrated with its surrounding neighborhoods. Our overall recommendation stresses a change of initial emphasis, from focusing on the spatial and design continuity of Spring and Main, to a linkage and reinforcement of the characteristics of three districts: Historic Core, Civic Center, and El Pueblo. Spring and Main become the primary linking streets, with secondary linkages on Broadway and Los Angeles. We recommend an emphasis on creating and linking two revitalized districts: the Historic Core extended all the way up to Second Street, and El Pueblo extended south to Aliso. In this scenario, the Civic Center becomes a monumental landscaped bridge between two of Los Angeles's most historic neighborhoods.



Main and Spring as the principal organizing streets of the whole El Pueblo District

Main, Spring, and Broadway as bracketing streets for the Civic Crossroads, the core of the Civic Center

Main and Spring as components of the larger Historic Core street grid

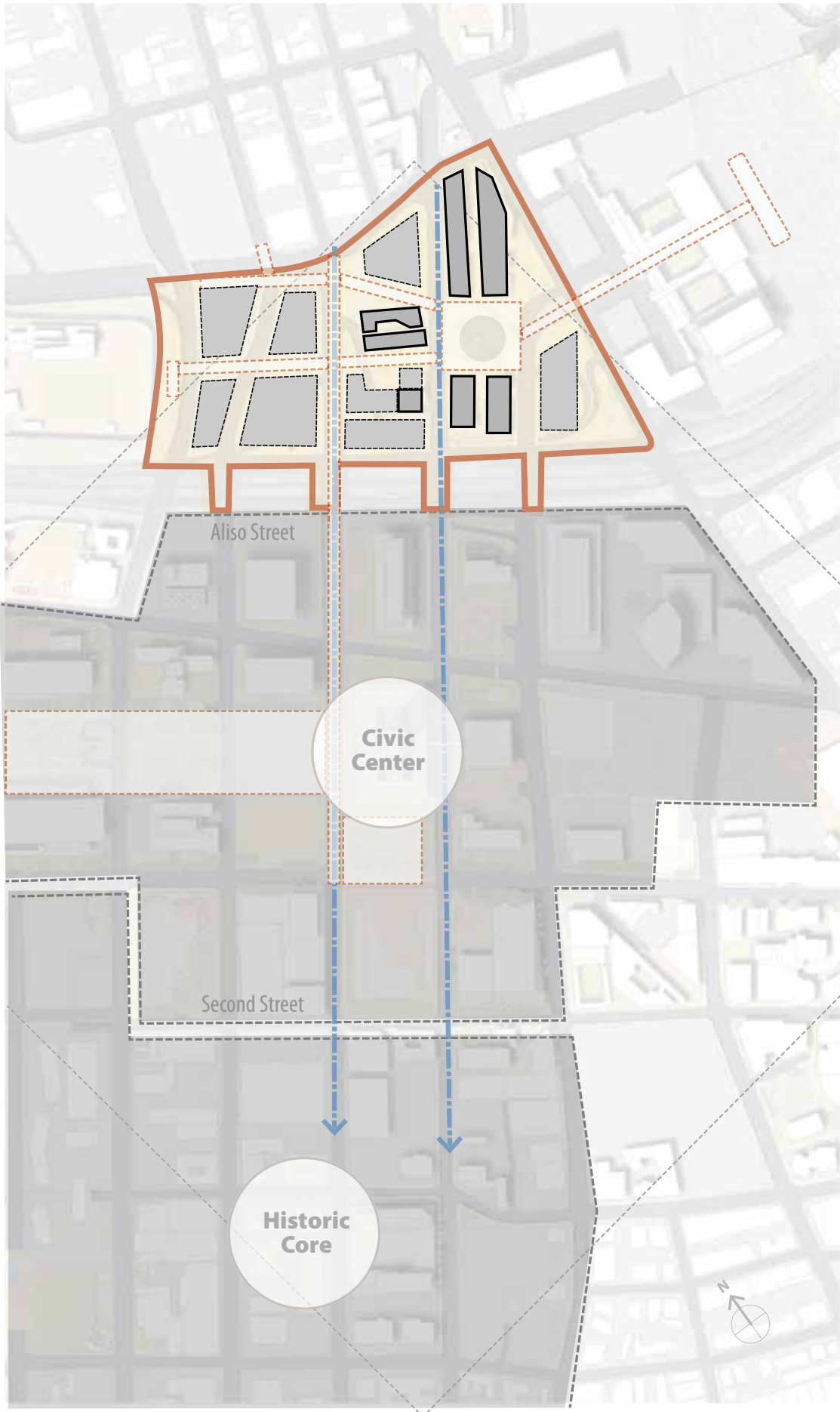
Main Street and Spring Street

The first recommended strategy is to avoid treating Main Street and Spring Streets as paired equals in a monumental streetscape composition. Though characteristic of the kind of Beaux Arts planning we saw in the Civic Center in the early 20th century, such a symmetrical approach would not reflect the very different histories of the two streets, nor their changing roles as they move from north to south. Instead we recommend that each street, for the most part, be designed to differentiate and strengthen their individual histories, character, and purpose.

Second, we recommend avoiding the use of a single design from one end of the study segment to the other, that is, from Fourth Street on the south to Cesar Chavez on the north. Within that distance, the streets pass through three distinctive districts, and we recommend that the street design change to reflect each of those districts.

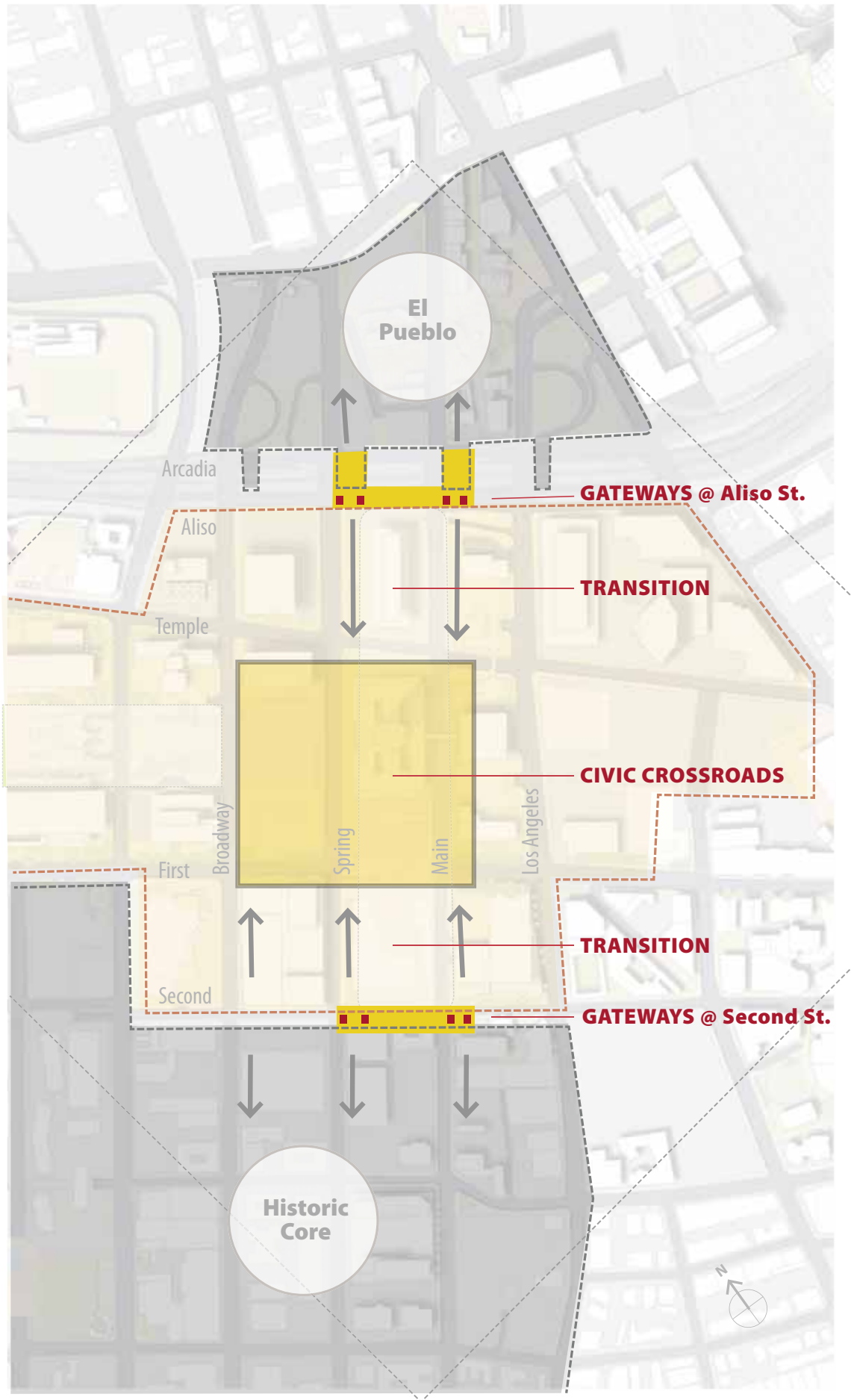
While some continuity is necessary to assure the flow of motor vehicles, we expressly recommend against a unitary, engineering-driven design predicated on maximizing vehicular capacity. The rush-hour convenience of commuters, particularly those in single-occupancy vehicles, should not dictate a rush-hour street design. Traffic flow for private vehicles should be balanced with the needs of pedestrians, residents, bikers, the very young, the elderly, the disabled, and transit riders - both bus and rail. This rebalancing of the street design reflects long-standing recommendations within the field of urban design and planning, and is increasingly apparent in city policies at all levels, including the aforementioned downtown streetscape standards developed jointly by the departments of City Planning and Transportation. These reflect the Villaraigosa administration's focus on the revitalization of downtown, transit-oriented development, and pedestrian friendly streets.

Appropriate design strategies should reflect how both Main Street and Spring Street change their dimensions, function and character within the three districts.



El Pueblo District

L.A.'s most historic district was subject to devastating destruction in the 1950's, with only a fraction of the original buildings remaining. The district has been almost entirely re-engineered for traffic purposes. El Pueblo is now enjoying new prospects for revitalization for a variety of reasons: new institutions such as La Plaza de Cultura y Artes; vibrant new cultural activities in Chinatown; new housing development along Cesar Chavez Boulevard; the growing demand for new housing downtown; and the convenience of walking proximity to the downtown commercial core, civic center, and regional transit hub at Union Station. Main Street within El Pueblo has begun to be upgraded – more needs to be done. Spring Street requires a fundamental transformation to make it the north-south spine of El Pueblo redevelopment and the prime link between the Civic Park and Chinatown.



Civic Center District

Heading north at Second Street, a distinct change in land use, character, and district occurs. Particularly with the completed or planned construction of the Caltrans, Police, and Federal Courts buildings, Second Street is emerging as the new and rather sharp demarcation for the Civic Center, replacing First Street in that role. In this area, Main and Spring Streets are wider. Spring has a 70' roadbed with 15' sidewalks. Main Street's roadbed is generally 64' wide, with 10' and 12' sidewalks. Buildings tend to be large, single-purpose, single-tenant, and set back with broad lawns and staircases. There are only two east-west streets within this district: First and Temple.

The block from Second to First Street can be seen as a transitional block between the Historic Core and the civic core. North of First Street, we view the three streets of Broadway, Spring and Main as bracketing the very core of the Civic Center, with Spring Street as the central axis (claiming for this short segment something of the prominence previously intended for it). This reflects a balanced meeting of Los Angeles City and Los Angeles County buildings, symbolically anchored to the southwest by the new courthouse of the Federal government, and to the southeast by the new transportation building of the State of California. We propose to designate this square zone as the Civic Crossroads. By definition it should be jointly planned and designed by the City and County, with support from other government stakeholders.

For the remaining Civic Center block, from Temple north to Aliso Street along the southern edge of the freeway, we see another transitional block, this time between the Civic Center and the Pueblo district. With the landmark U.S. Post Office and Courthouse building of 1938 at its center, we propose to designate this "The Federal Block", which will be further discussed in the next section.

We recommend the strengthening of thresholds between the districts, in the form of gateways at Aliso Street and Second Street. The blocks from Aliso to Temple, and from Second to First, can be treated as transition blocks, comfortably leading pedestrians, transit riders and motorists to the Civic Crossroads between Temple and First

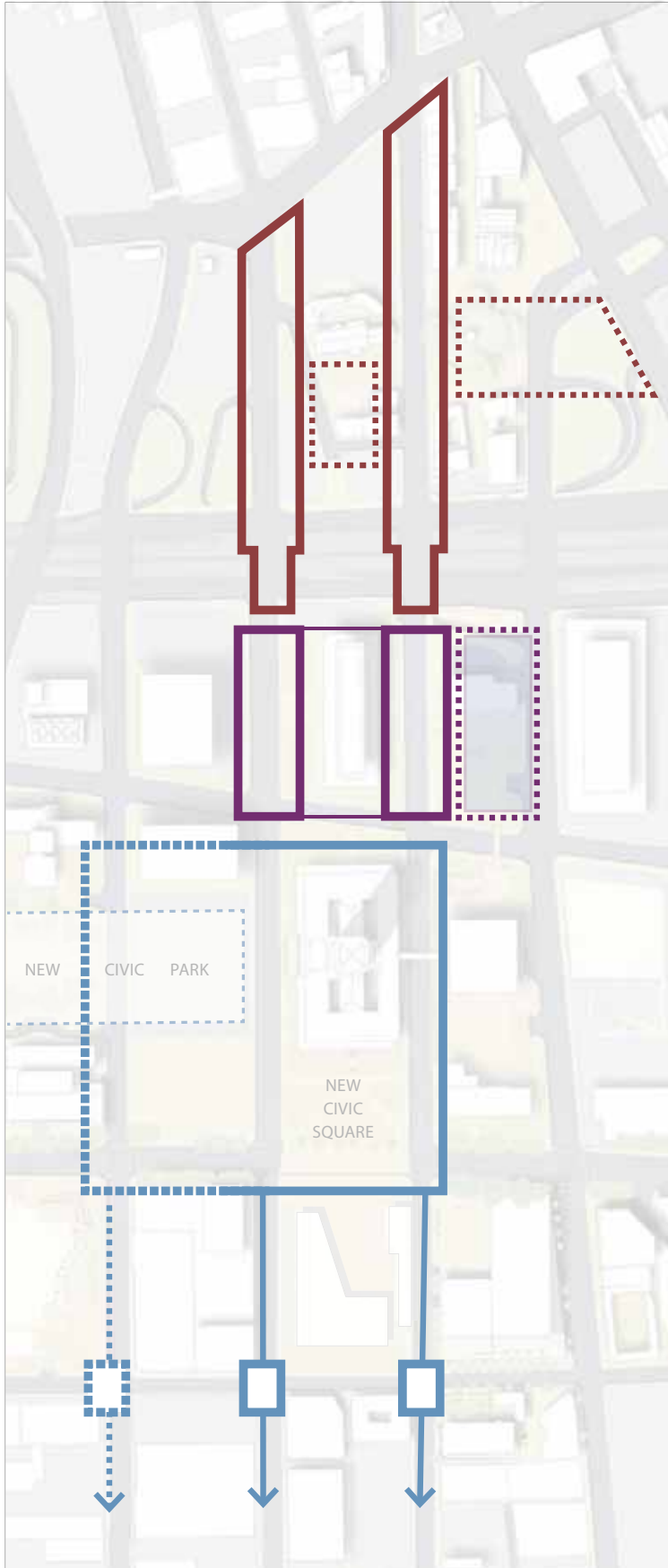
Narrower Streets

The streets in the Historic Core tend to have overall narrower widths, with buildings located at the property line.



Historic Core District

Within the Historic Core, streets are generally narrower than in the Civic Center (typically 51'-52' roadbeds, with 14'-15' sidewalks), the buildings are typically denser and built to the street edge, and the uses are weighted to commercial and, increasingly, residential use. The existence of the Broadway Historic District and the Spring Street Historic District, both listed on the National Register of Historic Places, indicate the historic primacy of those two streets within the Historic Core. Main Street south of Second Street is of somewhat less historic significance. Furthermore, downtown's historic street grid begins to widen noticeably south of Third Street - as Bunker Hill pulls away - meaning that Main, Spring and Broadway are joined in succession by Hill and Olive to form a broad net of north-south streets, each one enjoying prominence at different locations in the grid. Within this setting, Main and Spring are simply part of the overall pattern, and their design should reflect the overall character of the Historic Core district, as far south as Seventh or Eight Street. Therefore, for the two blocks of Main and Spring between Second and Fourth, we recommend primarily that these blocks incorporate the new City Planning standards applied to the length of the streets within the Historic Core.



a
**PUEBLO
LINKAGES**

Potential Funding:
City
County
CRA/LA
Metro
CALTRANS

b
**FEDERAL
BLOCK**

Potential Funding:
City
County
Federal
Private

c
**CIVIC
CROSSROADS**

Potential Funding:
City
County
Federal

