

Union Station Los Angeles, California

December 4–9, 2011



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A Strategy for Renewing the Union Station District
December 4–9, 2011

About the Urban Land Institute

THE MISSION OF THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;

- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and
- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has nearly 30,000 members worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

Cover photo: ULI panel.

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF ULI'S Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are

able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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The panel also wishes to thank the more than 75 city and Metro staff, elected and appointed officials, property and business owners, and residents for sharing their valuable time to participate in the interview process. The interview process is one of the key features of a ULI panel, and the input and observations from these individuals made the following recommendations possible.

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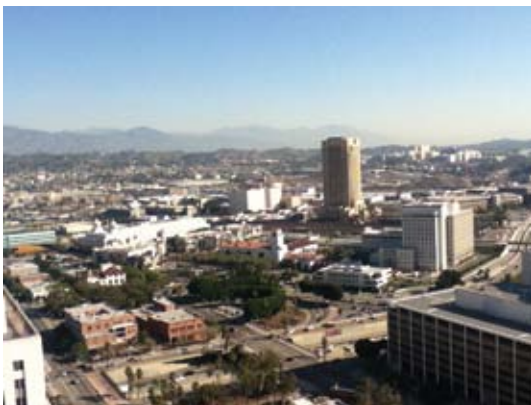
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Foreword: The Study Area and the Panel's Assignment

UNION STATION, IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, is a gateway to the city and rapidly growing as a major regional transportation hub for southern California. With a population of more than 17 million, the Los Angeles metropolitan region is one of the top 20 economies in the world. As the regional transit hub, Union Station connects five southern California counties with multiple rail and commuter lines, including Amtrak, Metro Rail (Red, Purple, and Gold Lines), and Metrolink, as well as Metro and other transit buses. As a result of these transit operations, approximately 100,000 people daily access the site. Propelled by the substantial expansion of the transit system, a growing retail presence, and the prospective addition of high-speed-rail (HSR) service, the station and surrounding area are at a turning point.

First opened in 1939, and restored in 1992, Los Angeles's Union Station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Union Station site encompasses more than 40 acres and is entitled for an additional 5.9 million square feet of office, retail, entertainment, and residential development. The Union Station study area has rich potential to continue the revitalization of downtown Los



Union Station, in downtown Los Angeles, is a gateway to the city and rapidly growing as a major regional transportation hub for southern California.

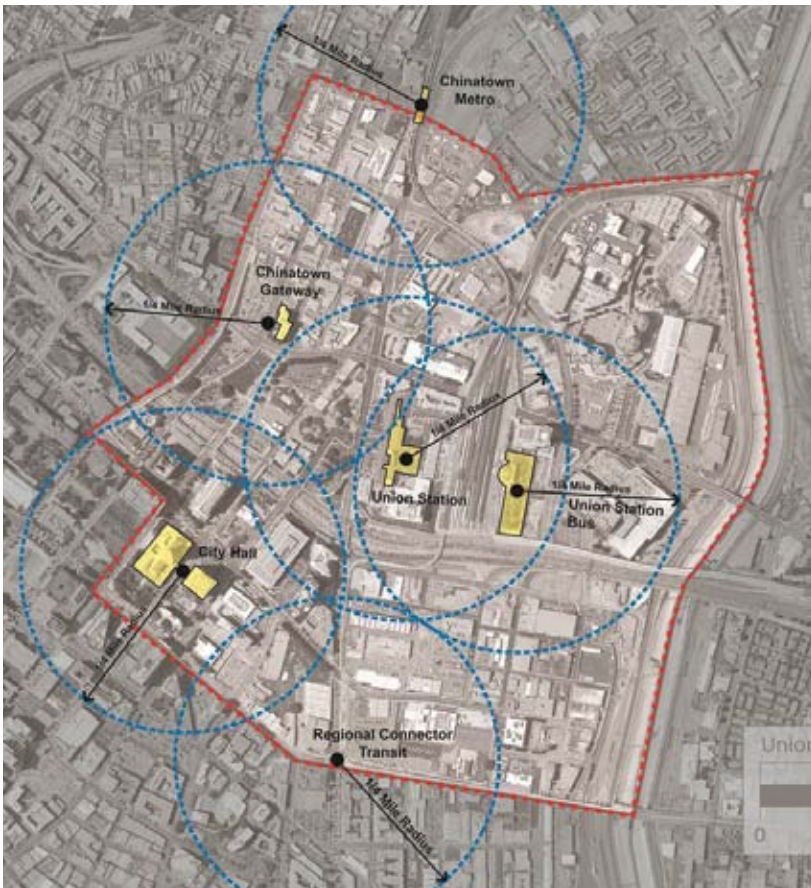


Regional map.

Angeles over the long term. The panel's recommendations seek to maximize this potential with recommendations for a transit-oriented, multimodal Union Station District with ample links among diverse neighborhoods.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is undertaking a master-planning process for Union Station that is expected to begin in mid-2012. As part of the input into that process, Metro teamed with the Los Angeles Department of City Planning to cosponsor a ULI Advisory Services panel to examine development opportunities, market potential, and development strategies for the Union Station study area. Many significant development and planning initiatives influence the character of the Union Station study area. The area also contains several cultural districts—including El Pueblo, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo—with specific needs and considerations.

The panel's task was to look at the study area as a whole to create a vision for the area and a guide for future



The study area includes a series of important nodes serving downtown. The overlapping network of quarter-mile walking distances from each of these nodes (depicted with blue circles) demonstrates the walkability of the area. However, the current organization of roadways, paths, open space, and other wayfinding components, combined with significant barriers such as the rail tracks and U.S. 101, limits the ability to optimize this walkability.



The study area divided into quadrants.

projects and plans. The goals are to capitalize on major redevelopment opportunities, create better connectivity between Union Station and the greater downtown areas, and explore how Union Station can serve as a catalyst for positive change.

Union Station Study Area

The study area spans approximately 500 acres and is bounded by the Los Angeles River to the east, First Street to the south, Hill Street to the west, and College Street and private rail right-of-way to the north. The study area, bisected north–south by Alameda Street and east–west by U.S. 101, also includes neighborhoods of significant cultural importance.

The panel divided the study area into the subareas discussed in the following sections.

Union Station and Terminal Annex

Located in the eastern half of the study area, the historic Union Station is the region’s transit hub, bringing together six commuter-rail lines, two subway lines, a light-rail line, Amtrak service, and multiple regional and local bus services. Previously completed developments in the area include the Metropolitan Water District office building, the Metro headquarters building, a private office building at the southwest corner (housing the First 5 LA child advocacy program), and 278 units of market-rate housing in the Mozaic at Union Station apartments on the northern edge. The remaining Union Station property was acquired by Metro from Catellus Development Corporation in April 2011 and is entitled for about 5.9 million additional square feet of development. The Terminal Annex area includes a historic former U.S. Post Office building (currently used as an Internet technology hub), a newer post office building, and the California Endowment headquarters. The Terminal Annex area is entitled for another 3 million square feet of development. East of the Union Station property are institutional uses including two jails with 6,600 inmates, the Metro bus maintenance facility, and a large warehouse for city records storage known as the C. Erwin Piper Technical Center.

El Pueblo

The historic center of the city is El Pueblo de la Reina de los Angeles, which contains a collection of historic buildings from the founding of the city, the shops on Olvera Street, restaurants and museums such as the Avila Adobe house, the Chinese American Museum of Los Angeles, the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, Sepulveda House, as well as La Placita Olvera and Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church.

Chinatown

The area of Chinatown east of Hill Street is in the study area. The neighborhood is a commercial hub with Asian restaurants and businesses along the major arteries of Broadway, Spring Street, and Hill Street, as well as some mixed-use residential and commercial. An MTA Gold Line station is located near the intersection of North Spring Street and College Street and is part of the Angels Walk Pedestrian District Plan.

Little Tokyo

Located in the southern portion of the study area is Little Tokyo, featuring cultural sites for the Japanese community such as the Buddhist temple and school and the Japanese American National Museum. North of the Buddhist temple, the area is predominantly industrial, both private and public, with the largest facility being the Department of Water and Power. In this neighborhood at the corner of Alameda and First streets is a large development site known as Mangrove Estates, a 5.66-acre city-owned site that is currently occupied by a surface parking lot, a vacant building, and a 19,500-square-foot city office building. The city is planning to sell the site to a private developer for a mixed-use development.

Currently, Mangrove Estates will likely be used for the construction staging area for the Regional Connector Project, an underground light-rail project that will go through the central city. This light-rail project includes relocation of the current at-grade Little Tokyo Gold Line station to underground, just outside the study area.

Several government facilities, such as a fire station and the City of Los Angeles Personnel Department, are located in this area. Also included at the northern edge of the primary commercial area of Little Tokyo is the Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).

Civic Center

The Civic Center is the government center of the city and home to federal, state, county, and municipal administrative buildings. The portion of the Civic Center area within the study area includes the Los Angeles City Hall, the existing U.S. Courthouse, and federal buildings east of Spring Street and north of First Street. This neighborhood is accessible from the subway's Metro Red and Purple Lines at Civic Center Station.

The Panel's Assignment

The Union Station study area is under pressure to grow and change. The region's rail and bus transportation system will continue to grow. The study area surrounds the hub of this system. Many existing development rights, potential new public amenities, and multiple transit projects are proposed in the study area. It also has several cultural districts that are major assets. Governance of the study area is primarily the responsibility of the city of Los Angeles, although property owners in the area include the county of Los Angeles and the federal government.

In consideration of these conditions, the panel was asked to respond to the following questions:

- Should the city of Los Angeles's land use policies for the area influenced by Union Station change to reflect the emergence of Los Angeles Union Station as the transit hub for southern California? If so, how?
- Does Union Station present unique market opportunities both internal to the station property and for the area in the vicinity of the station?
- How can the transit and transit-oriented development (TOD) at Union Station best be used to reinforce and complement activities in Chinatown, Olvera Street and El

First opened in 1939, and restored in 1992, Los Angeles Union Station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument, Little Tokyo, the Los Angeles River, and the emerging Cornfield Arroyo Seco Specific Plan area? What synergies are possible?

- Is the success of the area north of the 101 Freeway dependent upon healing the divide created by the freeway, or can the area develop its economic identity independent of the Civic Center and Central City?
- If the linkage is critical, what options should be explored to create the links? If not, what strategies should be implemented to fully develop the area's identity?
- How should the area infrastructure improvements be prioritized to take full advantage of the potential created by Union Station's development?

This report describes the current conditions that exist in the study area, illustrates a vision of what can be achieved, analyzes the potential for various kinds of development, suggests development strategies to be pursued and timing for those strategies, and recommends specific tactics that can be used to implement them.

Summary of Recommendations

The timing is appropriate to move forward with meaningful changes for the study area in light of Metro's acquisition of the Union Station site and the collaborative potential between Metro and the city. That said, a significant time horizon may exist between the completion of the Union Station master plan and when development will actually occur on the site. After an intensive analysis of the constraints and opportunities, and lengthy interviews with dozens of stakeholders, the panel has produced the following recommendations for the Union Station study area, outlined in more detail in the report.

- Highlight the assets offered by the study area's three major cultural centers: Little Tokyo, El Pueblo, and Chinatown. The redevelopment of a Union Station District is an immediate opportunity to link, reinforce, and enhance these currently disjointed cultural communities to create significant amenities not just for Union Station but also for the adjacent Civic Center and downtown areas.
- Improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the study area. The entire study area is within a ten-minute walk of Union Station; however, widespread general wayfind-

ing and streetscape improvements are needed. These areas also need to be transformed by development, pedestrian-oriented streets, and activity.

- Recognize the market potential for short-, medium-, and long-term prospects. Residential development has short- and medium-term market potential to accelerate the area's growth, whereas the office market in that time frame is minimal. Retail potential is also currently limited, with the exception of ground-floor retail in residential properties and possibly a larger-scale big-box location. The addition of other residents to the Union Station District will contribute to making it more attractive for other retail and entertainment options.
- Encourage a greater diversity of uses south of the freeway. More pedestrian-oriented uses can serve the large workforce in this area. The key site for redevelopment south of the freeway is the underused Los Angeles Mall site, directly south of El Pueblo.
- Explore major institutional or large-scale residential development in the medium to long term for the Terminal Annex property north of Union Station. Almost any development, however, depends on mitigation of the industrial drop-forge use just to the north. Also, explore the relocation possibility for the two jails.
- Create a TOD plan for the Union Station study area designed to promote sustainable growth in walkable, urban mixed-use districts centered on transit assets, establishing a framework for pursuing specific development strategies and patterns. Metro, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, and the Union Station master-planning team should contribute to the creation of the plan. The TOD plan should be open to the possibility of HSR, which has the potential to stimulate demand for hotel and possibly office development, as well as for higher-density residential and specialty retail.

Current Conditions and Vision

THE AREA SURROUNDING UNION STATION presents a unique assortment of uses and activities that require specific explanation. The following sections outline the current conditions of that area and a conceptual vision for the future.

Current Conditions

As an emerging transportation hub with access to nearby historic neighborhoods, the Union Station study area represents an area of enormous development potential. The boundaries of the 500-acre Union Station study area are roughly a three-quarter-mile radius, or a ten-minute walk, from the entrance of Union Station. Some demographic considerations include the households and businesses within a quarter- and half-mile radius of the station.

The study area is in a prime location, with proximity to Los Angeles's downtown and financial districts, large employment centers such as public agency administration offices, the iconic Walt Disney Concert Hall, and other diverse, world-class entertainment venues.



The study area contains many vacant and underused sites that would benefit from redevelopment.



Location

The study area is in a prime location, with proximity to Los Angeles's downtown and financial district; large employment centers such as government and public agency administration offices; and the Grand Avenue cultural district with the new Civic Park connecting to the edge of the study area, which includes the iconic Ramón C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts, Walt Disney Concert Hall, and other diverse, world-class entertainment venues, such as LA Live. The study area includes numerous distinct neighborhoods, as well as the Civic Center, the Arts District, and larger "backlot" institutional users. The area is also a part of the Clean Tech Corridor, which seeks to convert a portion of the old downtown industrial area into an incubator for green jobs, technology, and the growth of the city's economy.

Current Land Uses

Most significant to the study area are the symbolic cultural centers for three of the region's most prominent ethnic groups: El Pueblo, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo. These neighborhoods are not only cultural communities, but also economic hubs and tourist attractions. The development of the Union Station study area presents a major opportunity to develop greater connectivity among these culturally rich districts, with the historic Union Station as a geographic center and transportation hub.

In addition to the mixed-use ethnic neighborhoods and Civic Center, the study area contains some significant industrial and institutional uses as well as many vacant and underused sites throughout, with the exception of the Civic Center core. These include vacant sites, parking lots, and sites that would require relocation of lower-value public uses. As described in further detail in this report, these sites, together with expansive multilane streets and fortified public buildings, give much of the study area an

“empty” feeling that makes nearby uses feel disconnected and short distances feel forbidding for pedestrians.

The northeastern portion of the study area houses two correctional facilities with a capacity of more than 6,600 inmates. Also in this quadrant are a data hub in a historic building, a Metro bus facility that will include a 16,300-square-foot bus operations administration building and a 500,000-square-foot bus maintenance building, and the C. Erwin Piper Center, a 47,000-square-foot city records center.

To the northwest of the study area is a heavy industrial manufacturing use, the California Drop Forge, whose manufacturing process sends a heavy weight onto metal, creating a seismic-level vibration and considerable noise impact. Developers have looked at an adjacent site for a residential and office project and realized the industrial use was too intrusive for any nearby development.

The panel heard that uncertainty and bureaucracy are typical burdens in the entitlement process for land development, lengthening schedules and increasing expenses. At least ten plans, as well as a variety of projects, exist for the study area, but the only adopted specific plan in the study area is the Alameda District Specific Plan (1996) for the Union Station property and the Terminal Annex Property. In addition, the Union Station site is governed by a statutory Development Agreement (1997) that ensures the site’s entitlements for another 20 years.

Circulation

The beautiful historic Union Station structure is a centerpiece for the traveling public and offers a travel destination in its own right. The transit system and proposed improvements centered at Union Station provide subway, commuter rail, Amtrak national rail, light rail, bus, and shuttle options, positioning it as a true world-class transportation hub for the region. The study area also contains two stops on the Metro Gold Line, in Chinatown and Little Tokyo. The main arterials in the study area are the U.S. 101 freeway running northwest to east and Alameda Street going north–south, Cesar Chavez Avenue, First Street, and



The study area contains two stops on the Metro Gold Line, in Chinatown and Little Tokyo.

Broadway. The panel also examined the pedestrian experience closely under current conditions.

Circulation: The Pedestrian Experience. The study area contains active communities and redevelopment areas around most of its perimeter but a void in the middle, particularly in terms of the pedestrian experience. The plaza area at the Union Station entrance is dominated by vehicular pickup and dropoff, an intimidating six-lane Alameda Street, and a grassy knoll populated by homeless people.

No clear path leads to the nearby historic El Pueblo. Turning right on Alameda, the first block consists of the rear service-entry side of Olvera Street retail buildings on the west side of the street and the inward-focused Mozaic apartments on the east side. Several more blocks of lower-quality commercial stretch northward before one reaches the heart of Chinatown. Off to the right are the historic old post office building and the attractive California Endowment building, but both appear as islands in a sea of underused parking.

South from Union Station on Alameda, a pedestrian must cross the noisy and utilitarian bridges over the 101 Freeway and then head south past the fortresslike detention center and Federal Building to the west and aging, industrial properties to the east. In the last block at the south edge of the study area, the west side includes the back of the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA and the side of the Japanese American National Museum. Across Alameda is the current Little Tokyo/Arts District Gold Line Station, with a large vacant lot slated for the Mangrove Estates redevelopment to the rear of the property.



Certain land uses in the study area, such as the Men's Central Jail, critically affect its development potential.

Businesses Near Union Station

| Distance from Union Station | Businesses | Employees | Primary employment sectors | Secondary employment sectors |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ¼ mile | 200 | 4,300 | Transportation (50%) | Services/retail |
| ½ mile | 970 | 20,600 | Government (48%) | Services/retail |

Source: ESRI, 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census Block information.

The route for visitors leaving Union Station to and through El Pueblo is nearly incomprehensible. Similarly, locals would never walk south on Alameda to Little Tokyo and the Arts District. Instead, most take the

Gold Line to Little Tokyo/Arts District or Chinatown, or the subway to the Civic Center or Downtown.

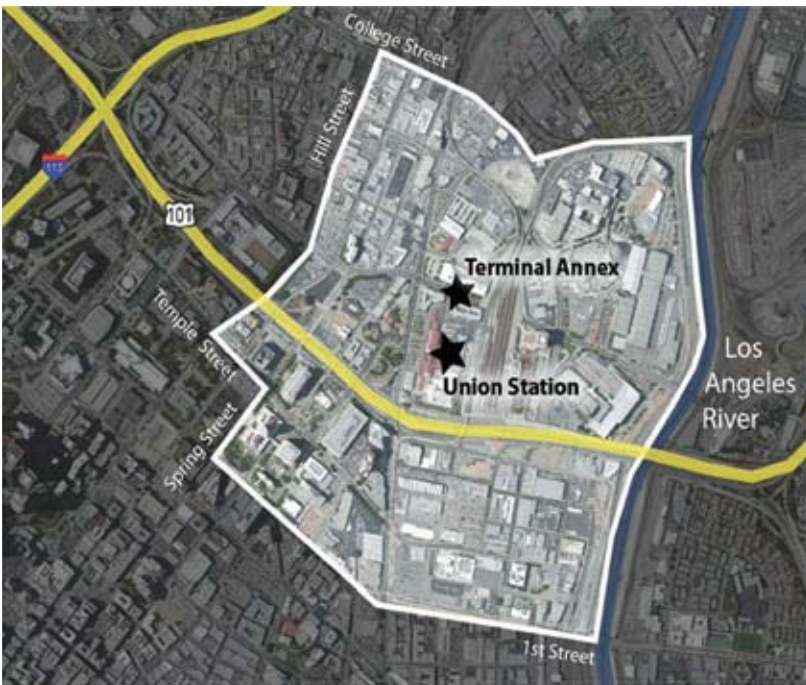
The paths along the 101 or Cesar Chavez Avenue east toward the Los Angeles River and Boyle Heights are even less inviting to pedestrians, because of the institutional uses of jail, warehouse, and bus maintenance east of Union Station.

Circulation: Safety and Security. Reportedly, nearly all areas of downtown Los Angeles, including the study area, are relatively safe during daytime hours. The areas south

and east of the downtown core have undergone rejuvenation in the last ten years, with significantly improved night and weekend activity. Little Tokyo and Chinatown are active on evenings and weekends as well.

The problem within the study area is getting to those destinations. The pedestrian routes to these evening and weekend activity zones pass through the unfriendly, “dead zones” previously described. Attractive and well-lit paths to destinations are a first step, but ultimately, the most important contributor to a perception of safety for pedestrians is activity. Although the buildings are beautiful, the portion of the Civic Center within the study area is nearly abandoned during evening and weekend hours. It forms a virtual barrier to any pedestrians passing through to the new park west of City Hall in the daytime on weekends, and even more to an evening stroll from Union Station to the Music Center, which consists of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson Theatre, Walt Disney Concert Hall, and a new civic park. Also contributing to the cultural offerings in this area is MOCA, the Colburn School of Performing Arts, and the Broad Museum, a new facility under construction. The steep topography of Bunker Hill—rising 100 feet—presents a physical barrier that is challenging for mobility. Tellingly, the proposed streetcar line does not extend through this area to Union Station.

Context: Union Station and the Terminal Annex.



Vision

The area and neighborhoods around Union Station are in many ways both the literal and figurative heart of Los Angeles. At the geographic center of a vast region with 17 million people, Union Station is the hub of a circulation system that is rediscovering its pulse. As new transit corridors begin to connect Union Station to the far reaches of the metropolitan area and carry increasing numbers of passengers, that pulse is strengthening.



An immediate opportunity in the study area is to link, reinforce, and enhance the cultural communities of El Pueblo, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo, which will create significant amenities not just for Union Station, but also for the adjacent Civic Center and downtown areas.

As the birthplace of the city, El Pueblo is at the center of Los Angeles's heritage. Together with Chinatown and Little Tokyo, it forms the cultural heart that today includes a large percentage of greater Los Angeles. Millions of people can trace their "LA roots" to this part of the city. Yet for most, this past is today distant and forgotten. The second, third, and fourth generations from these neighborhoods have moved on and created ethnic communities throughout the metropolitan area. This demographic shift has both built and expanded the rich cultural fabric that defines Los Angeles and made room in the historic center for new arrivals.

The destruction of this network led to the decline of the region's downtown, which was once home to one of the world's great public transportation systems. A robust system of subways and streetcars was displaced by a now infamous web of freeways that enabled and accelerated what has become the model of a polycentric city. With important centers from Westwood and the San Fernando Valley to Pasadena and the Los Angeles Harbor, the 650 miles of freeway systems have reached a saturation point. Many recent arrivals and visitors to Los Angeles have little or no experience of downtown other than passing slowly through it on a choked freeway. For them and the rest of the world, the city has become the poster child for unsustainable sprawl.

Over the past two decades, the renaissance of downtown Los Angeles has been quietly gathering pace. The Civic Center has always been the focus of government activity, with City Hall as its architecturally iconic center. An impressive downtown skyline reflects the growth of Los Angeles into a global economic center. Disney Hall reinforces downtown as a center for the arts. As a recent surge in new residential properties in the downtown area becomes more robust, the resident population with easy access to

attractions within the Union Station study area will grow. LA Live and the Staples Center have created a powerful draw for sports, entertainment, and events. Downtown Los Angeles has reemerged as the indisputable center of one of the world's great metropolitan areas.

Union Station is reemerging as the gateway to this vibrant center. Transit investments to grow the rail and bus systems—and soon, streetcars and bicycle paths—are making the connection between this gateway and the downtown area increasingly convenient. It is a front door to the city in a way that no freeway off-ramp could be. The success of Union Station as a hub of the Los Angeles region's public transportation network will generate increasing demand for development of complementary uses at the station itself. This success also represents a powerful catalyst for strengthening the historic and cultural neighborhoods adjacent to the station.

As with other great cities, the convenience of a central location to both live and work is obvious. The increasing density of downtown Los Angeles and the addition of significant amenities will both improve the quality of life and increase public transportation ridership. Yet this renaissance has largely ignored the areas around Union Station.

The beautiful historic Union Station structure is a centerpiece for the traveling public and offers a travel destination in its own right.





Union Station is the transit hub for downtown Los Angeles.

The attraction of the Union Station area for investment and development rests not only on the people who pass through the station but also on the quality of the surrounding area. Currently, the adjacent uses add little to, and in some cases detract from, the potential of the station. Conversely, although the station is an increasingly valuable asset to the future of downtown Los Angeles, its benefit to adjacent neighborhoods is far below what it could and should be. Recognizing, celebrating, and capturing the value of this interdependence is a significant opportunity not just for Union Station and its surroundings but also for the entire city of Los Angeles.

An immediate opportunity is to link, reinforce, and enhance the currently disjointed communities of El Pueblo, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo. This will create significant amenities not just for Union Station but also for the adjacent Civic Center and downtown areas. Midterm, the areas to the south, west, and east of the station represent significant opportunity, and supporting residential development will reinforce the attraction of the overall area. North of the station, however, the jail remains an impediment to development for the foreseeable future.

Creating a powerful, integrated destination where the station and adjacent areas are greater than the sum of their parts requires a compelling vision and committed leadership. It will take consensus and collaboration between

communities and entities that have historically been very independent.

The opportunity for a reinvigorated, strong “Heart of Los Angeles” is well worth the effort. A vision for this renaissance includes Union Station as the hub of a district of vibrant, distinct yet strongly interconnected neighborhoods—a destination that shares Los Angeles’s unique cultural heritage with visitors and adds yet another reason to come back to the city. Union Station itself can be a place that encourages those who pass through on their way to and from work elsewhere in the city to shop, dine, and meet friends. The station can be a destination with sufficient critical mass to attract families from throughout the region who take advantage of convenient public transportation for a day out that can rival other great southern California attractions.

The beneficiaries and benefits of creating an integrated and compelling vision for Union Station and its environs are many. For business owners in Chinatown, Little Tokyo, the Arts District, and El Pueblo, the station will offer increased demand and a more diversified market. Tourists already attracted to the offerings of individual neighborhoods will enjoy a more seamless travel experience. New investments can create a higher-quality public realm as well as attract additional amenities to the area for residents of these communities. New activities and venues in and around the station will be added for downtown workers. For Metro, as well as investors, developers, and station tenants, Union Station will be a more valuable asset.

The vision of a renewed heart of Los Angeles centered on Union Station is achievable even in an environment of constrained resources. It would certainly be enhanced by large-scale improvements such as the addition of HSR, capping a portion of the 101 Freeway, or reclamation of the Los Angeles River, but it is not dependent upon these projects. To achieve this vision, however, the residents must embrace it. They must see the renaissance of downtown Los Angeles as a restoration of the identity at the heart of the region that benefits all.

Development Potential

UNION STATION AND ITS ENVIRONS are ripe with development opportunity, but successful revitalization will require a detailed strategy and identification of the types of development most appropriate for the area.

Specific Market Opportunities

The panel examined specific market opportunities for residential, retail, hotel, office, recreational, and other uses for the study area.

Residential

The residential market has been a bright spot. The share of residential building permits in central-city Los Angeles has been growing steadily over the last 20 years (see table). Young professionals are choosing to live downtown. The panel heard in one interview that 60 percent to 70 percent of the residents in the Arts District are single women living alone.

Residential projects would accelerate the area's growth potential. Additional residential product could be a winner in the Union Station area, either adjacent to other residential properties in Chinatown or at the southern end nearer the Arts District—the site of a recent successful for-sale project. Bringing additional residents to the Union Station District will contribute to making it more attractive for other

Los Angeles Central City's Share of Residential Building Permits for the Metropolitan Region

| Period | Share |
|-----------|-------|
| 1990–1995 | 11% |
| 2003–2008 | 17% |
| 2008 | 25% |

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Residential Construction Trends in America's Metropolitan Regions 2010.

retail, restaurant, and personal service options in positive synergy among other uses.

Retail

The panel heard that real estate brokers are not currently optimistic regarding much additional retail in the study area, given other relatively large proposals for downtown retail along Grand Avenue, the currently stalled Related Company retail mall, the lack of success of Los Angeles Mall at the Civic Center, and the specialized retail in Chinatown and Little Tokyo. One exception would possibly be ground-floor retail in residential properties that would mainly serve those residents.

Hotel

Union Station—with its projected volumes of passengers from all over the region—provides a perfect opportunity for business meetings and overnight stays for business persons. Brokers familiar with the area suggest that a 120-room limited-service hotel tower with 5,000–10,000 square feet of meeting space would most likely be a winner in the near term. And given projected growth in passenger traffic volumes, including future rail service to the Convention Center and LA Live area, planning for a potential second phase expansion adjacent to the first tower might be prudent.

Office

After the explosion of downtown office towers in the 1980s, like many other central business districts (CBDs), the Los Angeles CBD has lost some of its luster, punctuated by a current vacancy rate of Class A and B space of around 16 percent to 20 percent, respectively, according to Grubb and Ellis's *Office Trends Report* for the third quarter of 2011. Real estate brokers familiar with the market are not sanguine about the prospects for building new office towers in the foreseeable future. The U.S. and world

economies are just coming out of this Great Recession, however; the real estate business is cyclical, and pessimism at the economic trough should not overshadow long-term potential.

The Alameda District Specific Plan and Union Station development agreement provide entitlement of approximately 6 million square feet for Union Station and another 3 million for the Terminal Annex immediately to the north. Based on the current vacancies in both Class A and Class B office space in the Los Angeles CBD, the panel does not foresee the potential for large-floor plate office for some time. In addition to the CBD surplus space, the LA Times building across from City Hall is 80 percent vacant because of downsizing and relocation of its printing operations.

However, certain large-scale users coming out of the new economy may possibly want to be adjacent to Los Angeles's major transportation hub and ask Metro or others with parcel sizes to do a build-to-suit office tower. One official interviewed thought that some Los Angeles County administrative office demand may exist in the medium term—in the next ten years—from consolidation of uses in scattered and obsolete offices. Although the cost per square foot would be higher for new space, lower total space requirements and other office operational efficiencies could offset those costs.

As the regional transportation hub, the Union Station site is a good location for office development, but when or whether demand will be sufficient, particularly by nongovernmental users, to make this feasible is unclear. Metro will benefit from maximizing density on the sites, recognizing that high-rise construction, for any use, may not be feasible until considerable economic recovery occurs. The commencement of HSR service to Union Station would likely increase feasibility of the Metro sites, particularly for commercial (office or hotel) use. In any case, the development of Metro's Union Station sites will take place over a long period based on local absorption potential and market cycles.

Dealing with the Unknown: With and Without High-Speed Rail

HSR has been proposed for California, and several options have been considered for intersecting with Union Station. The general consensus of the panel is that HSR is extremely desirable as a long-term transportation strategy and as an economic development engine for downtown. The biggest unknown at this time is how the system would be funded and whether HSR will ever actually occur.

Design issues include the ticketing and baggage-handling requirements and the capacity at Union Station to absorb these functions. HSR would also generate auxiliary development requirements similar to an airport terminal, such as retail and other amenities, hotels, ground transportation, parking, and rental car functions.

Any significant development in the area within or immediately around the station should not preclude any of the HSR options. In any case, many other development sites available in the study area are outside the proposed HSR path and other requirements of HSR.

Challenges to Market-Based Development

Certain land uses in the study area critically affect its development potential. Most prominently, these include the Men's Central Jail and the California Drop Forge. The jail is a major deterrent for maximizing TOD in the vicinity of the region's transportation hub. Because Los Angeles County is currently reviewing a project that would rebuild the Men's Central Jail, county officials should give utmost consideration to relocation options for the jail. Similarly, the considerable noise and vibration generated by the drop forge simply make it incompatible with new residential and office development. As such, relocation of this facility is a prerequisite for any uses other than heavy manufacturing.

In addition, some industrial and government uses should eventually be relocated to make way for connectivity to the south along Alameda Street and east to the river. For example, the C. Erwin Piper Center, currently a city records



The subject area includes a significant amount of land owned by public organizations.

facility, could realistically be relocated in the long term to maximize the transportation uses optimally located adjacent to Union Station. Other sites should also be viewed as potential locations for long-term future redevelopment.

Development Strategies

Development of the study area will be a long-term undertaking. Stakeholders should protect the potential of the area to meet Los Angeles's long-term growth needs, particularly for job-creating commercial uses. However, important opportunities exist for short-term action that can begin to invigorate the immediate area around Union Station.

Near-Term Development Activity

The panel feels the near-term market provides an opportunity to prioritize infrastructure investment and focus on key public space improvements that will strengthen the identity of the project and stimulate interest in medium- to long-term TOD.

Focus on the Union Station Core Area. The core area west of Union Station across Alameda and into El Pueblo is a key area for public development focus in the near-to-medium term. A focus on redevelopment opportunities and circulation improvements in this subarea—the Union Station core—can create pedestrian and visual connectivity to Chinatown and the Civic Center and increase the vibrancy and residential and visitor use of the El Pueblo blocks.

Publicly owned parking lots and undeveloped parcels within this core area, adjacent to the El Pueblo historic buildings on the blocks bounded by Alameda, Main, Hill, Cesar Chavez, and the 101, should be planned and offered for development, as was originally proposed in the Civic Crossroads Plan prepared in 2008 for Project Restore. Development of these sites will create a much greater sense of “place” than currently exists and will fill in the gaps between uses that discourage pedestrians and visitors while bringing 24-hour life to the crossroads of the Union Station area. Development of a mix of housing types, with inclusive affordable units, will offer the greatest diversity of new residents and connection to existing communities. If needed to serve the El Pueblo uses, structured pay parking can be included in the new projects.

These sites are owned by the city and the county, so a jointly focused effort in planning and development will be needed, comparable to the planned Grand Avenue project to connect the Civic Center area to the Bunker Hill area. The development should be mixed-use, with mid-rise



A focus on redevelopment opportunities and circulation improvements in the neighborhoods closest to Union Station can create pedestrian connectivity to Chinatown and the Civic Center and increase the vibrancy of the El Pueblo blocks.

residential above, and a hotel should be considered on the parcel directly west of Union Station. Ground-floor retail should be designed to create contiguous clusters of pedestrian activity, support residential use, and support the El Pueblo/Olvera Street and Chinatown districts. Development of the recently started Chinatown Gateway project on the north side of Cesar Chavez Avenue between Broadway and New High Street will help create the connection between El Pueblo and Chinatown.

Enhance Circulation. The panel strongly recommends an infusion of public investment that not only improves pedestrian connectivity but also spurs private developments that activate these connections. The maturing of the transit system and the increase in passenger volume through the station make the study area a natural location for meetings, drawing on its relative ease of access from the entire metropolitan area.

The county has plans to improve the pedestrian connections from Alameda through El Pueblo to Hill Street as part of the El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park Pedestrian Improvements Project. The city has plans for streetscape improvements to Cesar Chavez Avenue, but both projects are east–west oriented and apparently do not address the important north–south connectivity to residential, commercial, and employment centers including the Civic Center and on to Downtown, Little Tokyo and the Arts District, and Chinatown. Although streetscape and

Key public improvements in the Union Station core area should include narrowing and rerouting of Los Angeles Street where it reaches Alameda in front of Union Station.



To make way for connectivity, the panel suggests eventually relocating some of the industrial and government uses to the south along Alameda and east to the river.

other pedestrian improvements are important, these areas need to be activated by people heading toward destinations.

From a wayfinding perspective, signs are important, but the attractiveness of the route must also draw visitors through the areas to destinations. Shade for daytime and lighting for early morning and evening are critical.

Key public improvements in the Union Station core area will include narrowing or rerouting of Los Angeles Street where it reaches Alameda in front of Union Station and adding a new pedestrian street to the north of Plaza Church to provide clear connectivity from Union Station through El Pueblo and into Chinatown at Broadway near the China Gateway site. Wayfinding signage leading from Union Station should be part of these improvements.

Improvements to the 101 overpasses should be designed to improve pedestrian connectivity between the Union Station core and the Civic Center for workers and visitors. “Park 101” is a proposal to cap the 101 freeway in the Los Angeles Union Station study area with green space. However, an alternative the panel recommends for consideration is a retail-focused freeway cap that can create a strong link within the study area and generate steady pedestrian activity (see the box “The Cap at Union Station, Columbus, Ohio”).

Greater diversity of uses south of the freeway should be encouraged, with more pedestrian-oriented uses to serve the large workforce in this area, which will contribute to the pedestrian density and comfort of the overall area. A

key site south of the freeway is the underused Los Angeles Mall site, directly south of El Pueblo. Because of its size, it may be offered in two parcels for mixed-use development with ground-floor retail uses serving the Civic Center daytime population.

Find Opportunities in Adjacent Neighborhoods. In the study area, the Little Tokyo/Arts District and Chinatown districts largely function independently of the Union Station core area. In the short term, these areas can be assisted by pedestrian- and visitor-oriented improvements, including streetscape improvements, wayfinding signage within Union Station and at Metro stops and key pedestrian intersections, and development of “gateway” visual design elements.

Medium- to Longer-Term Development Activity

The study area’s underdeveloped sites offer opportunities to serve the city’s long-term job creation and residential densification needs through sustainable TOD as well as to create connectivity among the existing culturally and economically important uses in the area.

Small and medium-sized infill development sites in Little Tokyo and Chinatown (including the Mangrove Estates site at First and Alameda streets) are well positioned for mixed-

use and residential development over time. In addition, a number of major sites in the central part of the study area offer potential for development as the market permits. These include the following:

- The Terminal Annex property north of Union Station is most poised for redevelopment. The site is already entitled for 3 million square feet of development and is centrally located within the study area, very close to Union Station. The site is large enough to accommodate major institutional and job-creating uses (for example, a university or corporate campus) or large-scale residential development with little disruption to current users. Almost any development, however, depends on mitigation of the industrial drop-forge use just to the north. The need for public participation to spur development of these parcels cannot yet be predicted.
- Just south of the 101, between Alameda and Center streets, several parcels are available for development. However, these sites lack adjacencies or amenities and are highly exposed to freeway noise. Until much greater development pressure exists (such as could be generated by capping the 101), these sites seem unlikely to develop for commercial or residential use.



The Little Tokyo/Arts District and Chinatown districts can be assisted by pedestrian- and visitor-oriented improvements, including streetscape improvements and development of “gateway” visual design elements.

Planning and development of publicly owned parking lots and undeveloped parcels adjacent to the El Pueblo historic buildings will create a much greater sense of place than currently exists.



Short-term (pink) and long-term (yellow) development opportunities near Union Station.



- Several major sites that are currently in use for industrial government purposes—such as the Piper Technical Center north of the 101 and the Department of Water and Power facility on Alameda/Temple—could be redeveloped for more intense commercial or residential use, depending on when the value of development justifies the considerable relocation costs for these facilities. The presence of these “soft” sites within the study area offers substantial long-term “land-banked” TOD op-

portunities within the Union Station District. Redevelopment of these sites would also benefit any progress on reclamation and activation of the Los Angeles River.

Office and commercial development are more likely to locate in and around Union Station and in the southern half of the greater Union Station District. Affinities with the Civic Center and proximity to the 101 make these locations more supportive for commercial uses. Mixed-use TODs are more conducive to commercial office opportunities woven into the district.

Residential infill will be more viable in the northern districts, building and expanding on the El Pueblo, Chinatown, and Cornfield Arroyo Seco neighborhoods. A goal is to enhance existing neighborhoods by focusing on compatible infill redevelopment and adaptive use on key underused properties. The panel recommends supporting significant growth of the residential population to stimulate retail growth and pedestrian presence. Strong consideration should be given to the development of housing for a range of incomes. Tools such as density bonuses and the city’s housing funds can help achieve this goal.

Ground-level retail is important to the presence and activity of people on the street. Although this use cannot be promoted pervasively throughout the district, it should be required in key areas, especially around the Union Station terminal, where ground-level urbanism is critical to establishing the brand of this district as active, progressive, and supportive of transit. In a planning and design strategy for

The Cap at Union Station, Columbus, Ohio

“Park 101” is a proposal to cap the 101 freeway in the Los Angeles Union Station study area with green space. However, an alternative the panel recommends for consideration is a freeway cap, as illustrated by this successful retail-focused cap at another Union Station—this one over Interstate 670 in Columbus, Ohio. This great example of a crossing that effectively makes freeway underneath disappear persuasively addresses the challenge of overcoming a major barrier to connectivity. It is inspired by the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy. The retail activity offered by this type of cap would create valuable connectivity and enhance the urban experience in Los Angeles’s Union Station study area.

Constructed in 2004, the \$7.8 million retail-focused freeway cap features nine shops and restaurants and has reconnected downtown Columbus with the adjacent Short North, a densely populated arts and entertainment district. Instead of the desolate interstate highway overpass that stood as a barrier for 40 years, the retail development over I-670 provides more than 25,000 square feet of leasable space. It has transformed the void caused by I-670 into a vibrant urban streetscape. The I-670 cap is one of the first speculative retail projects built over a highway in the



DEBORAH MYERSON



The Cap over Union Station in Columbus, Ohio, is a great example of a retail crossing that effectively makes the freeway underneath disappear, persuasively addressing the challenge of overcoming a major barrier to connectivity.

United States. Seattle, Boston, Phoenix, and Hartford are other cities that have constructed caps.

Sources: ULI Development Case Study (2005); “Ohio Highway Cap at Forefront of Urban Design Trend,” Chicago Tribune, October 27, 2011, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-10-27/news/ct-met-kamin-highway-caps-20111027_1_cap-union-station-interstate-highway.

a streamlined, retail-based option for Park 101, retail uses can flank Main and Los Angeles streets as they cross over the freeway.

New connections must be developed to address the major barriers of the greater Union Station District, including the 101, the Los Angeles River, and the rail corridors.

The proposed connections and the specific projects that accomplish them must result in an efficient multimodal transportation and open-space system. These improvements will continue to support and expand commercial vitality within a livable mixed-use urban neighborhood surrounding Union Station.



The panel recommends a retail-focused freeway cap over the 101 that can create a strong link within the study area and generate steady pedestrian activity.

Planning and Design for Transit-Oriented Development

IN CONCERT WITH THE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES detailed in the previous section, the ULI panel recommends the creation of a TOD plan for the 500-acre Union Station study area, aimed at fostering sustainable growth in walkable, urban mixed-use districts centered on transit assets. Walkability and convenience are the primary attractions of a TOD district. An integrated and convenient system of transportation assets is the foundation of attracting new investment to the study area. Sites like the Union Station core area, including the ethnic neighborhoods that surround it, are ideal for mixed-use infill and adaptive use because of the variety of building types and ages and the diversity of land uses.

In addition, clearly mapping and marketing the system will expand public and developer awareness of the system's benefits. The positive opinions people hold of the Union Station area and the opportunities for infill development improve as transit is made more convenient and other amenities are added to make this an address of choice for living, working, and recreation. The agents of future implementation for the Union Station study area, including Metro, the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, and the selected master-planning team must contribute to this TOD plan, which can also be supported by the *Los Angeles Downtown Design Guide and Street Standards* (2009).

The essential ingredients for a TOD plan centered around Union Station include the following:

- *Outline a comprehensive program of regional connectivity of all possible modes of travel—from motorized to human powered. The Union Station study area must be internally and regionally connected as completely as possible. A key need is expanding transit access and mobility by investing in “last mile” solutions from Union Station. Opportunities exist to provide and foster*

bike-share and car-share programs within Union Station, programs that can extend trips to final destinations for transit users.

- *Designate a collective district that is defined by the influence of Union Station and geographically centered on it. The current study area comprises portions of several neighborhoods, including Chinatown, El Pueblo, the Civic Center, the Arts District, Little Tokyo, and Boyle Heights. Considering the health and identity of each of these subdistricts is important to strengthen the spectrum of offerings in the district as a whole.*
- *Establish a newly defined Union Station District area for planning purposes that makes Union Station the center of this district's universe. A new Union Station District will create a framework for leveraging the opportunities associated with the anticipated TOD at Union Station while marketing the amalgam of ethnic identities of the neighboring individual historic districts.*
- *Offer stakeholders representing each district the opportunity to define the planning and design goals of their district and to help craft the design standards and guidelines. Districts with diversified identities compel people to move from place to place. The diversity of ethnic groups and subdistricts is complemented by diverse experiences promoted by distinct identities for the numerous streets, parks, and plaza destinations. These experiences collectively enhance the destination quality of the Union Station District as a whole.*

Although each district should strive to maintain its identity, the collective design and streetscape standards should seek to provide a common thread throughout the Union Station District. Some competitive behaviors exist among the districts—sustaining individual identities appeals to the unique pride of each ethnic group; however,

unified planning and funding will lead to enhanced opportunities and future growth for all. An example of this collective opportunity is to capitalize on cultural tourism as a destination activity for the Union Station District. The most attractive destinations in cities worldwide are successful as a result of authentic diversity. The Union Station District has these genuine qualities today, and this plan, together with the transportation assets, must build on those qualities.

- *Expand on cultural tourism destinations*, particularly supporting first-class community facilities and institutions such as the Chinese American Museum of Los Angeles, the Japanese American National Museum, the Mexican American Museum, and the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles. The institutions and retail orientation in these districts further support their ethnic flavor. An emerging concept of land use clusters seeks to identify geographies within the greater district that have affinity for commercial, office, residential, or retail and cultural tourism uses.
- *Form a greater infrastructure funding district (IFD), as authorized by state statute.* Overlay districts of this sort secure bond funding and determine the apportioning of taxation to the landowners within each of the subdistricts. The subdistricts within the greater district may offer boundaries for assessment of each district separately and according to their relationship and benefit from Union Station and its expansion. More detail on creating an IFD appears in the “Implementation” section.

A Linked Network of Public Spaces

The planning and design strategy for the Union Station District should establish a linked network of public spaces to guide the creation of a sense of place. A public-space network composed of streetscapes, bikeways, parks, plazas, and historic sites and natural amenities can help express the extensive history, unique character, and diversity of the Union Station District while also creating a unified identity for the study area.



The La Plaza Park spaces just west of the Union Station terminal act as the visual foreground to this great architectural icon and should be enhanced by plazas that invite visitors to the terminal. This collection of spaces building out from Union Station becomes the hub of reinvestment, development sites, and improvement of public spaces that reaches out, connecting districts to the core Alameda/Terminal district. Extending from Alameda toward El Pueblo, connectivity for pedestrians should extend across the street and continue south over and across the 101 on Los Angeles and Main, streamlining the proposed Park 101 to a retail-focused one-block segment. These enhancements to the pedestrian connections link through Civic Center to Bunker Hill down to Gallery Row and to the historic core. This “eyes on the park” strategy is essential to the connectivity objective.

The public open-space anchors of La Plaza Park on the west and the Los Angeles River on the east can be linked by a series of smaller parks, plazas, walkways, and open spaces in and around Union Station.

The naturalization of the Los Angeles River offers a dramatic east flank for open-space amenities that are necessary to distinguish the greater district as a desirable neighborhood for urban dwellers. Aggressive plans currently underway by the Public Works Bureau of Engineering and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineering provide a vision for naturalization of the river and call for surrounding development to orient toward and connect to the amenity.

The panel strongly recommends improving the pedestrian experience in the plaza area at the entrance to Union Station.



The Union Station plan should embrace and connect with this larger initiative for greater Los Angeles.

The development of public spaces that create a nucleus for the project should be coordinated with the planned pedestrian and street improvements to Cesar Chavez Avenue and the improvements on Alameda Street from Cesar Chavez to the 101. The panel strongly recommends that the Union Station plan focus on this key space and its links from Union Station to El Pueblo, to Civic Center, and to Chinatown to create strong definition for the overall district. This definition should connect to the architectural icon of Union Station. This strategy supports and expands the existing investment and infrastructure of the Angels Walk Pedestrian District Plan.

Programming and Marketing

Programming of both the existing and the proposed public spaces is essential in promoting development and making the public spaces active. Union Station provides a spatial opportunity for providing information on what is available in the neighborhood. Because of the multiple districts involved and the lack of clarity in how the Union Station District markets itself to the visitor, the project needs a central marketing and programming entity.

Implementation

THE BALANCE OF THIS REPORT identifies policies and strategies for implementation and addresses the organizational opportunities and challenges facing the study area. The approaches described have worked in other contexts across the country to overcome barriers to development or effective decision making. The implementation strategies are designed to work in concert with each other. The panel recognizes that a number of plans that affect the area have already been completed, including the Civic Crossroads Plan, which echo many of this report's recommendations. That said, Metro's acquisition of the Union Station site and the spirit of coordination between Metro and the city make the timing right to move forward with meaningful changes for the study area.

Metro Property: Operations and Master Planning

The Union Station building itself has a number of distinctive attributes that make property management challenging. It includes 140,000 square feet at grade as well as extensive tunnels and platforms underground. The historic nature of the building creates special considerations with regard to maintenance and capital improvements. Metro should hire an owner's representative to manage the building. A third-party broker currently leases and manages the Union Station retail space. This relationship should continue, given the attributes of the space and the importance of a cohesive merchandising plan.

To plan the entire Union Station site, Metro has issued a request for proposals for master-planning services. The panel believes this course of action is wise. However, the panel also believes that a significant time horizon may exist between the completion of the plan and the actual development of the site. When Metro is ready to implement its master plan, Metro should hire an owner's representa-

tive to coordinate the execution of the Union Station master plan and be its representative on a group the panel is calling the "project focus team," described in detail below.

An Owner's Representative and Project Focus Team for Union Station

As Metro moves from planning the site to developing it and looking at the larger Union Station District, the panel recommends that an owner's representative, selected through a competitive process, oversee the implementation of the Union Station master plan. The ideal candidate would have a good understanding of TOD, community engagement, design, and master development to provide third-party expertise and focus on implementation. Although Metro has an excellent operations and real estate management team, the high-profile nature of the Union Station site suggests Metro would benefit significantly from third-party management. Key advantages of this approach when combined with the project focus team strategy include the following:

- Ability for Metro to focus on transit attributes of the project while using a real estate expert to manage community engagement, construction management, and master development by a development entity;
- Broadened awareness of community priorities and issues and how the development of the Union Station site fits into the larger Union Station Transit Area plan described below; and
- Indemnification related to construction from quasi-governmental protections.

One of the apparent challenges facing effective implementation of master planning in the area is a tendency toward a "siloed" approach to planning taken by most government

agencies. Government entities from the city, county, and state looking at transit and land use generally focus on their projects and plans without a great deal of coordination. Coordination is often limited to reacting to projects as they arise. Determining the master plan for the Union Station area will require interagency coordination to avoid creating significant barriers to development. As part of the implementation of the Union Station master plan, Metro could help overcome this issue by forming a project focus team that includes high-level representatives from key public agencies and community representatives. The project focus team would meet regularly as appropriate—less frequently (i.e., quarterly) while the project is in a dormant phase, more frequently (i.e., monthly) when projects arise or key decisions need to be made. Consistent communication will be important to developing the trust and rapport between stakeholders to respond effectively when necessary. Among other things, the Union Station project focus team can facilitate

- Developing an intentional community engagement strategy to respond when relevant projects come up (development, design, planning) for the broader study area; and
- Creating a mechanism for sustained communication and the joint planning effort between the Los Angeles Department of City Planning and Metro.

Establish a Focus on the End User

Union Station is the transit hub for downtown Los Angeles. In addition to Metro light-rail, subway, and bus service, Amtrak runs train and bus services, MetroLink runs train service, the University of Southern California Medical Center operates shuttle buses to and from its campus, and the DASH bus service and Los Angeles Department of Transportation operate six DASH shuttles. In combination, these services create a comprehensive downtown transit network; however, each service operates a schedule that is largely independent of the others. The services do not share a common payment or fare structure. A common complaint is that the services at Union Station are difficult

to navigate and do not necessarily take into account the end user's experience (i.e., the transit rider). Increasing the focus on the end user will ensure that scheduling, wayfinding, and connections are integrated into the operations. It will also ensure that the variety of transit operators at Union Station consistently communicate regarding their plans.

Entitlement and Zoning

Entitlements are a significant barrier to development in California and in the study area. Creating an overlay zone for the Union Station District (either with new code or new zoning designation) can emphasize flexibility in use and appropriate, consistently high-quality design and construction materials. The city and others have produced a tremendous number of plans that affect all or a portion of the study area. Unfortunately, earlier plans did not generally contemplate the level of service and intermodal activity that exists or is planned for Union Station and thus are out of date. Metro and the city should coordinate to develop a transit-area plan for the Union Station District. Because much of the proposed district is covered by a specific plan, a likely tactic to do so would be to expand the boundaries of the Alameda District Specific Plan. This effort would attempt to update and coordinate the visions contemplated in the many existing plans. The focus of the plan would be specific policies and strategies for implementation.

Additional implementation strategies include the following:

- Develop Union Station District and subdistrict-specific design guidelines that complement the transit-area plan vision, new pedestrian-oriented street design standards, and community desires.
- Invest in program-level environmental impact reports based on specific plans to position the areas for redevelopment (outside the Alameda District Specific Plan, which has California Environmental Quality Act clearance). Although this process would affect the existing Alameda District Specific Plan and the development agreement for Union Station, it could be especially effective for the multiple publicly owned parcels in the study

area. It would be a significant investment by the public sector. However, by navigating the California Environmental Quality Act process up front, these areas would remove one of the most significant barriers to development in California. With a specific plan and programmatic environmental impact report in place, the approval timeline will be significantly reduced, thereby allowing developers to react to market opportunities quickly. This type of risk mitigation could make these areas especially attractive when combined with the transit and amenity infrastructure related to Union Station and downtown.

Transfer of Development Rights

The city should explore incorporating a transfer of development rights (TDRs) system in an update of the Central City North community plan. The intent would be to use a portion of the 5.9 million square feet of remaining entitlements at Union Station and perhaps the 3 million square feet of entitlements in the adjacent Terminal Annex site to support development at sites surrounding it. This strategy has the potential to create a revenue source for Metro while removing a barrier to development in the surrounding neighborhoods. Additional development surrounding the station will add vibrancy to the area and create an additional transit customer base.

TDRs began as a landmark preservation technique but have evolved into a mechanism to promote a variety of community development and preservation goals. In 1975, Los Angeles adopted a CBD Redevelopment Plan that used TDRs to promote housing, open space, historic preservation, cultural and community facilities, and transportation improvements. This is a mid- to long-term strategy, given the lack of demand for excess density today.

The city of Los Angeles has had a TDR program in place for most of downtown south of the Civic Center since the 1980s. The TDR program allows a transfer of development rights, uses, or square footage within a specific plan, or from site to site within a specific plan. The TDR program was amended in 2010 to more closely align with central-city policies. The TDR program was successfully used to

enable development of the U.S. Bank tower and the new LA Live venue, among others. The city receives revenue from the additional taxes collected from the development and in the case of the U.S. Bank Tower received sales revenue that enabled the renovation and expansion of the Los Angeles Public Library.

Potential Funding Mechanisms

The policy and development recommendations in this report will require various levels of funding and other resources. Similarly, a variety of funding mechanisms will be necessary to implement the recommendations. Following is a list of potential funding mechanisms that already exist. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Local public and private entities will likely identify additional sources of funds, and the existing planning documents may help identify additional local state and federal funding sources.

Measure R Station Area Planning Funds

Revenues generated through Measure R provide funding for transit projects and transit-related improvements. Understanding the importance of the areas surrounding transit stations, Metro budgeted \$16 million in fiscal year 2012 for station-area planning efforts. Some of this money could support the transit-area planning efforts for the Union Station site and surrounding areas.

Infrastructure Financing District

IFDs provide a funding mechanism for infrastructure improvements without additional assessment of property owners. In the area around Union Station, 30 percent of the property taxes represent funds that otherwise would be allocated to the city of Los Angeles. The IFD income stream can be used to service bonds or reimburse a development entity for eligible infrastructure improvements within the district. The city should support proposed amendments to the IFD statute that would make the tool more flexible and easier to implement.

Denver's Union Station

Denver's Union Station Redevelopment Project is the most comprehensive and ambitious multimodal transportation hub and TOD currently being built in the United States. When completed, the \$491 million transportation infrastructure project will connect 25 million annual passengers in Denver and the greater metropolitan region to the site. The project is transforming 42 acres of former rail yards into a model community of mixed-use development organized around the hub of the regionwide transit system. An eight-track rail terminal will house commuter and long-distance rail passengers; a new light-rail transit station will serve three urban transit lines; and a 22-bay underground bus terminal will host regional, express, and local buses. Amtrak trains and the city's free downtown shuttle program also connect to the site. These new passenger facilities will handle more than 200,000 daily trips. Surrounding landowners have 3 million square feet of entitlements, including several mid-rise and high-rise apartment and office projects currently in design or under construction.

In the 1960s, the area surrounding Denver's Union Station, called the Central Platte Valley (CPV), was nothing but

rail yards, abandoned warehouses, and a community separated from the Highlands neighborhood to the west by the interstate.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the CPV developed a set of vision and value statements, establishing a master-planning framework for redevelopment of the area. A number of public amenities were programmed for the area, including great public spaces and attractive connections over the railroad tracks and across the freeway.

By the end of the 2000s, a number of new residential and mixed-use projects had brought a million square feet of development and 1,000 new households to the CPV. Yet the area immediately surrounding Denver's Union Station remained undeveloped. The Regional Transportation District purchased the land and partnered with the city and county of Denver and the Denver Regional Council of Governments to develop a master plan and select a master developer.

The current master plan is dense and ambitious, focusing primarily upon commercial development. A Fortune 500 company has chosen to locate its new world headquarters building in the development, and more than 1,000 apartment units are currently under design for the area.

What changed? A tremendous public investment in transit. The Denver City Council hired an owner's representative to manage the financing, design, and construction of the public infrastructure for the Denver Union Station Transit District for the Denver Union Station Project Authority, a consortium with representatives from the Regional Transportation District, the city, the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and private citizens appointed by the mayor. The owner's representative worked with the authority to arrange over \$300 million in federal loans, manage grant and federal eligibility requirements, and oversee the design/build team to construct the project within the budget and to schedule.

Denver's Union Station Redevelopment Project is the most comprehensive and ambitious multimodal transportation hub and TOD currently being built in the United States.



Conclusion

THE UNION STATION STUDY AREA OFFERS

a promising vision for a multimodal future for Los Angeles. With the historic Union Station as its hub, numerous opportunities exist to advance vibrant, mixed-use development alongside the planned transit growth. Metro's acquisition of the 42-acre Union Station site and its associated 6 million square feet in entitlements offers a substantial opportunity for long-term growth. Collaborating with the Los Angeles Department of Planning for the greater 500-acre study area demonstrates valuable foresight about the prospective impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

The panel's interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including community groups, developers, public officials, and business interests, indicated that the timing is opportune to move forward with meaningful changes for the study area. Although the panel also found that short-term development prospects may be more tentative, this situation provides an opportunity to move forward with critical entitlement and infrastructure investment and public space improvements.

Other opportunities in the short term include additional residential development, which will help activate pedestrian and streetscape enhancements. With an eye to mid- to long-term development potential, the panel recommends the establishment of a Union Station District and a plan for TOD. A key long-term consideration should be the possibility of relocation of the two jail facilities and the drop-forge industrial use, which remain two significant constraints on the site.

The possibility of HSR at Union Station increases the potential for hotel and possibly office space demand. The panel also believes that even without HSR, the substantial growth of the regional transit system would create a similarly high-demand scenario for development.

The Union Station study area has rich potential to continue the revitalization of downtown Los Angeles over the long term. The panel's recommendations seek to maximize this potential with recommendations for a transit-oriented, multimodal Union Station District with ample links among diverse neighborhoods.

About the Panel

Charles R. Kendrick, Jr.

Panel Chair
Andover, Massachusetts

Kendrick is the managing director of Clarion Ventures LLC, which he founded to attract capital to urban communities. Clients have included the Bank of America, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, private foundations, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and the St. Louis Development Corporation.

He has spent over 35 years as a developer, investment banker, and strategic adviser specializing in urban redevelopment projects and portfolios. He was an investor and managing director of the Hamilton Securities Group Inc., has created investment vehicles for cities, and has raised capital for Access Capital Strategies LLC.

Kendrick also started an asset management subsidiary and helped create the Office of Urban Development Action Grants at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, later becoming deputy director. During the 1970s, he was a development director for the Rouse Company.

As a trustee of the Urban Land Institute, Kendrick has served as chair of the Affordable Housing Council, Inner-City Council, National Policy Council, and as the vice chair of district councils. He has been a member of the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) board of directors for 13 years and serves on ICIC's finance and governance committees. He is also the chair of the board of directors of the Edgewood Retirement Community in North Andover, Massachusetts.

Kendrick holds an MBA in finance from George Washington University and a BA in architecture from Princeton University.

Jennifer Ball

Atlanta, Georgia

Ball is vice president of planning of Central Atlanta Progress Inc., where she manages land use and transportation planning policy initiatives and implementation projects within downtown Atlanta. Recent notable initiatives under her direction include the development of the Imagine Downtown vision plan, the Downtown Livability Code zoning regulation update, and the ongoing implementation of \$35 million worth of public space capital improvements, including streetscape improvements, wayfinding signage, and roadway upgrades.

Beginning her career with John Wieland Homes as a marketing coordinator and then a custom home coordinator, subsequently she joined the Preston Phillips Partnership (a medium-sized architectural and engineering firm specializing in retail projects) as a project assistant. Following graduate school, she took a position with Robert Charles Lesser & Co. as an associate and performed real estate market research and analysis for development projects and public sector redevelopment plans.

In 2004, Ball was named a member of the *Atlanta Business Chronicle's* "Up and Comers: 40 under 40" group of promising young leaders. She has been an active member of the Urban Land Institute as a founding member of the Atlanta District Council Young Leaders Group and a member of the membership committee. She is also a member of the American Planning Association (APA). She currently serves as the president of Georgia Tech College

of Architecture Alumni Committee and previously served on the Georgia Tech Young Alumni Council.

Ball has been a guest lecturer at Georgia Tech's City and Regional Planning program and a presenter at national and local city planning conferences on topics ranging from downtown economic development and business improvement districts to transportation planning and plan implementation. She has authored an APA Planner's Advisory Service Report on street vending.

She received a BS from the Georgia Institute of Technology College of Architecture and a master of city planning degree also from Georgia Tech. She received the Frederick K. Bell Memorial Fellowship and the Georgia Planning Association Student of the Year award.

Kenneth Ho

Denver, Colorado

Ho is a development manager at the Trammell Crow Company in Denver, Colorado, where he is responsible for deal sourcing, structuring, underwriting, and execution. Prior to joining Trammell Crow Company, Ho was founder and president of KHO Consulting LLC, where he provided real estate advisory services to public and private sector companies. His focus was on development feasibility and implementation for urban infill and transit-oriented development plans.

Before founding KHO, Ho was a vice president for Cherokee, a private equity fund with more than \$2 billion under management that invested primarily in brownfields throughout North America and Western Europe. At Cherokee, he was responsible for deal origination, underwriting, deal structuring, and dispositions. He has also provided advisory services to several public agencies and private companies, developing revitalization plans and helping them evaluate the feasibility of proposed development plans and assessing the development potential for their real estate assets.

Ho received his BA from Stanford University, a master's of regional planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he was a Weiss Urban Livability Fellow, and an MBA with a concentration in real estate from the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina where he was a Trammell Crow Residential Fellow. He is active in a number of nonprofits, is a graduate of Leadership Denver, class of 2006, is on the executive committee of the Urban Land Institute-Colorado, and is a member of the Denver Planning Board.

Todd Johnson

Denver, Colorado

Johnson, a partner and principal with Design Workshop, has devoted his career to planning and designing memorable projects throughout the United States, Canada, the Middle East, and Asia. He is an expert in creating urban spaces that celebrate public activity and in using walkways, streets, buildings, parks, plazas, and art to stimulate interest and activity. These accomplishments are always built on a solid understanding that collaboration between members of a team is essential to achieving success.

He is responsible for leading the partners of Design Workshop in defining the firm's own sustainability principles called DW Legacy Design®. The firm's work is founded and evolved on performance in four measure categories: environment, community, economics, and art. The DW Legacy Design® approach is evident in the firm's award-winning work on Riverfront Park at Denver Commons; Kierland Commons in Phoenix; and the redevelopment of the rail yards in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Johnson is a graduate of Harvard University and Utah State University and was awarded a fellowship from Harvard to produce an urban design plan for the city of Jerusalem. The plan was awarded First Prize for Urban Design by *Progressive Architecture Magazine*.

William Kistler

London, United Kingdom

Kistler is a senior client partner in Korn/Ferry Whitehead Mann's London office, leading the firm's Real Estate Sector for the United Kingdom and Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA).

Kistler served as president of the Urban Land Institute—EMEA. In this role, he led a London-based team that managed strategic partnerships, program development, and fundraising for ULI. Before joining ULI, Kistler was managing director of an executive search firm focused on the real estate industry with offices in Europe and the United States.

Earlier, he was general manager of the Disney Development Company, responsible for the planned community of Val d'Europe at Disneyland Paris. Kistler's prior experience includes senior roles in the United States and Europe at JMB Properties in Chicago and Cushman & Wakefield in New York. He began his career at IBM where he spent 12 years overseeing the company's real estate in New York and Paris.

Kistler earned a BS in architecture from the University of Southern California.

William C. Lawrence

Boston, Massachusetts

Lawrence brings more than 30 years of in-depth background and experience in real-world problem solving, strategy formation, feasibility assessment, and project management for complex real estate development projects. TR Advisors LLC (TRA) is a real estate consulting and asset management firm with specialized expertise in the disposition and management of transportation-related and publicly owned real property. TRA is the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's designated real estate representative in and around the greater Boston area. With Jones Lang LaSalle, TRA is also managing different aspects of the Chicago Transit Authority's real estate assets.

Lawrence is currently involved in several TOD feasibility studies in New England and one in Florida.

Before his current position, Lawrence served as principal of Cityscope Inc., where he managed development projects for both public and private clients. Cityscope specialized in value creation for client assets, including strategic planning and assessment, asset positioning and management, and public and private financing.

Prior to starting Cityscope, as director of seaport planning and development at the Massachusetts Port Authority, Lawrence planned and developed a diverse portfolio of public sector real estate assets on 400 acres. Before that, he created and directed public sector real estate consulting groups in Los Angeles and Boston for the Kenneth Leventhal & Company, a national CPA firm. Prior to that, he founded and managed for 12 years the William C. Lawrence Company, a market feasibility and economic development consulting firm located in Pasadena, California, and for four years, he managed environmental policy planning at two large West Coast new community developers: the Irvine Company and Mission Viejo.

Lawrence has a master's degree in city and regional planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design; a master's degree in business administration from Pepperdine University, Malibu; and a BA in political science from Trinity College, Hartford. He also was awarded the Thomas J. Watson Traveling Fellowship to study new town planning in Europe and India after college. He is currently a full member of the Urban Land Institute and has participated in numerous Advisory Services panels. He is a licensed real estate broker in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Amy Neches

San Francisco, California

Neches is a partner in TMG Partners, a full-service real estate development and management company founded in San Francisco in 1984. TMG has developed more than 18 million square feet of property throughout the Bay Area and is active in a variety of office, retail, residential, and

industrial properties. Neches focuses on the acquisition and development of properties in San Francisco.

Previously, she was the manager of project area planning development for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, overseeing large-scale urban redevelopment planning and implementation efforts, including Mission Bay, Transbay, and Yerba Buena Center. She first joined the Redevelopment Agency in 1995, with previous experience in investment banking and affordable housing finance.

Neches holds BA and MBA degrees from Yale University. She serves as a chair of the Urban Land Institute national Public Private Partnership Council and is a member of the ULI San Francisco District Council Executive Committee. She also serves on the board of directors of the Golden Gate chapter of Lambda Alpha International, an honorary land economics society.

Mary Smith

Indianapolis, Indiana

Smith is a senior vice president and director of Parking Consulting for Walker Parking Consultants. Since joining Walker in 1975, she has been actively involved in all phases of parking planning and design for parking projects throughout the world. In 2010 alone, she consulted on projects in China, Russia, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, and Korea. Her particular areas of expertise include pedestrian and vehicular circulation; flow capacity and wayfinding in mega-parking structures (including a 10,250-space structure in Anaheim, California); accessibility; and integrating shared parking, parking management, and parking operations into the parking design.


Widely acknowledged as one of the leading parking planners and functional designers in the world, Smith is coauthor of *Parking Structures: Planning, Design, Construction, Maintenance, and Repair*, now in its third edition. Elected to the Parking Consultants Council (PCC) in 1984, she has led the development of multiple PCC publications and multiple chapters for the ULI/National Parking Association (NPA) *Dimensions of Parking*. She authored the

parking chapter for the second and third editions (2000, 2009) of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)'s *Transportation Planning Handbook* and the parking section of APA's *Planning and Urban Design Standards* (2006). She was also the lead author for the second edition of *Shared Parking* (2005), commissioned by the Urban Land Institute and the International Council of Shopping Centers. She was author of a "Research in Brief" for the Department of Justice on crime prevention through environmental design in parking facilities and served on a blue-ribbon committee to develop guidelines for security at federal buildings following the Oklahoma City tragedy. She also served as representative for ITE, the International Parking Institute, and NPA to COST 342, a European Union project that studied the experience gained internationally with the effects of governmental parking policies.

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