Homelessness on Skid Row

**History of Skid Row**

*Geography:* L.A.'s Skid Row refers to the downtown area east of the Financial District, partially overlapping the Industrial District area called Central City East.

*Early Development:* The region was initially an agricultural area until the Southern Pacific Railroad was built in the late 1870s. This development began to industrialize the area with an emphasis on agriculture, which brought a huge influx of people to Los Angeles, including seasonal farm workers. With successive waves of new job opportunities in Los Angeles -- the discovery of petroleum shortly before the end of the 1800’s, the arrival of the film industry shortly after 1900, the beginning of automobile manufacture in the early 1900’s among them -- additional migration occurred. In response to these primarily short-term, transient workers, a number of small, residential hotels opened in the to cater to this population. The majority of these migrant workers were also single and male, which contributed to the seediness of the area by causing a proliferation of bars, brothels, and saloons. The presence of mission workers in Skid Row can be traced back to this moment, as they tried to offer a healthier alternative to what they perceived to be immoral and self-destructive pursuits.

*Great Depression:* Because of the area's proximity to the railroads, it was frequently the first destination for newcomers to the LA area. During the Great Depression, many displaced farmers escaping the Dust Bowl were derided as hobos and bums who “rode the rails.” By the 1930s, Skid Row was home to as many as 10,000 homeless people, alcoholics, and others on the margins of society. In response, some social service centers were created to assist this population. However, others had a much more hostile reaction to the newcomers in the LA area. In 1947, LAPD chief Clemence Horrell ordered a "blockade raid" of the whole Skid Row area in which over 350 people were arrested. The LAPD had claimed that "at least 50 percent of all the crime in Los Angeles originates in the Skid Row area," and later reported that there had been no "strong arm robberies" on Skid Row as late as one week after the raid. Long time residents, however, were skeptical that the changes would last.

*20th Century Wars:* In the time following World War II and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, the Skid Row area began to be populated by numerous military personnel. These veterans, mostly transient young men, passed through Los Angeles and frequently began use missions as their safe havens. This previous exposure to Skid Row attracted numerous returning drug- and alcohol-addicted and emotionally scarred Vietnam veterans to come back to and settle in Los Angeles later in life. The veterans found Skid Row particularly accommodating because of the presence of service facilities and the absence of the rejection they faced in other communities.

*1960s:* By the 1960’s, many of the area’s small hotels did not meet the fire and safety codes established by the city due to their age and lack of upkeep. In response, the code conformance orders allowed owners to either repair or demolish the
structures. Because of the high cost of repair and the limited income from the hotel’s low fees, the code had the unintended consequence of numerous demolitions. In total this caused a 50% decrease in the housing stock—from approximately 15,000 units in the early 1960’s to 7,500 units in the early 1970’s. The sudden decimation of living opportunities obviously contributed to the displacement of a significant number of extremely low-income, substance dependent, and/or mentally unstable persons who had settled in what is now Skid Row. During this post-Vietnam War period, the demographics of the area changed from predominantly elderly, white, and alcohol-dependent to predominantly young, nonwhite, and drug-dependent.

1970s: By 1975, local leaders started focusing on the problems faced by residents in the area, leading to the creation of the Central Business District Redevelopment Project Area. A Blue Ribbon Committee comprised of politicians, business leaders, and academics issued a report in 1976 calling for the preservation of the remaining housing stock in addition to other steps to address the problems of residents in the area. In response to this report, the city began a program of acquiring, rehabilitating, and managing the remaining single-room occupancy hotel units and adding a limited number of community amenities, notably two parks, clinics, and shelter facilities. Currently, around 3,500 of the surviving 6,500 single-room occupancy units have been acquired and rehabilitated or replaced. However, an unintended consequence of this action was that when other communities couldn’t provide for their city’s homeless population, they shipped their problem to downtown L.A., commonly called the “Not In My Backyard” mentality.

1980s crackdown: In 1987, LAPD chief Daryl Gates, backed by then-mayor Tom Bradley, announced plans for another crackdown of the homeless on Skid Row. Police and firefighters conducted a number of sweeps through the area but advocates for the homeless provided enough opposition to make them temporarily abandon the plan. When Gates announced that the crackdown would resume, L.A. City Attorney James Hahn responded that he would not prosecute people arrested in the planned sweeps who simply “did not have a place to stay.” Gates, still backed by Bradley, retorted that Hahn had an obligation as the city attorney to arrest these people. A few days later, then-Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky introduced a proposal that the city stop enforcing its anti-camping laws on Skid Row until adequate housing could be found for all its residents. The council rejected Yaroslavsky’s proposal, but after hearing testimony about the LAPD’s intended crackdown methodology, the council passed a motion asking Gates not to enforce the anti-camping laws until adequate housing could be found for the area’s residents.

Recent History: The Skid Row area that includes small hotels, missions, and shelters also is or was in close proximity to numerous warehousing, distribution, and industrial activities. This sector of the economy, which dates back to the railroad development, has been growing significantly; a sharp contrast to the sluggish performance of other sectors of the economy on the national level. Because many of these businesses are small, run by immigrants, and employing low-skilled workers who do not have transportation options, these businesses need to remain close to
the city’s core. As they expand, however, they put pressure on the limited housing stock in the area, raising the specter of further loss of the area’s very low cost housing stock. In addition, many of the businesses are food-based, which engenders serious public health problems in a dense area with a large street population lacking access to sanitary facilities.

While throughout most of its history the area’s population has been predominantly single and male, the recession of the 1990’s and late 2000s resulted in many middle class families breaking up, with both single adults on their own and single adults (mostly women) with children arriving in Skid Row and in need of shelter and other assistance. With the increasing popularity of communities surrounding Central City East for middle and upper-income housing, along with the pressure for expansion of local industries, there are concerns that the area is becoming gentrified, ensuring that some of the homeless on Skid Row will be displaced.

Current Data
Demographics: As of the 2000 census, there were 17,740 people and 2,410 households residing in the 4.3 sq. mile neighborhood. Approximately 8,000 of them live permanently or semi-permanently in the 6,500 single-room-occupancy hotel rooms and approximately 2,000 persons occupy beds in shelter and transitional facilities, for periods of time ranging from days to several months. The population living on the streets is variously estimated from 4,000 to 5,000 persons, with the numbers changing both seasonally.

The racial makeup of the neighborhood is 51.4% Hispanic or Latino, 25.5% White, 16.7% African American, 0.4% Native American, & 5.8% Asian. In the area, the population is spread out with 9.8% under the age of 18, 54.7% from 18 to 34, 39.9% from 35 to 64, and 4.6% who are 65 years of age or older. The per capita income for the neighborhood is $14,210. About 41.8% of the population is below the poverty line. While the population is still predominantly made of up single males, there are increasing numbers of women and children, now pushing close to 10% of the total population on Skid Row.

Health & Safety Services: The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services operates the Central Health Center in Downtown L.A., serving Skid Row. The LA Fire Department Station that serves the neighborhood is currently the busiest firehouse in Los Angeles.

Many other services for homeless people in Los Angeles are centralized in Skid Row, including the Volunteers of America, the Union Rescue Mission, Downtown Mental Health, Downtown Women’s Center, Los Angeles Mission, Fred Jordan Mission, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s Cardinal Manning Center, and Midnight Mission. In 2007, Union Rescue Mission opened Hope Gardens, a facility outside of Skid Row that is exclusively for women and children.

Successful Litigation Attacking Homelessness
Los Angeles Cases
Patient dumping
In September 2005, hospitals and law enforcement agencies were discovered to be dumping homeless people on Skid Row. Then Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa ordered an investigation and Bill Bratton, LAPD chief at the time, claimed that the Department was not targeting homeless people specifically, but only people who violate city ordinances. The Los Angeles City Attorney investigated more than 50 of about 150 reported cases of dumping. By early 2007, the city attorney had filed charges against only one hospital, Kaiser Permanente. Because there were no laws specifically covering the hospital’s actions, it was charged with false imprisonment in an untested strategy. In response to the lack of legal recourse available to fight patient dumping, then California State Senator Gil Cedillo sponsored legislation to address addressed the issue. He also drafted legislation that would create a community courts system to address quality of life crimes such as loitering and panhandling. It would also hand out sentences for petty crimes, usually in the form of community service.

2006 lawsuit
In 2002, newly appointed LAPD chief Bill Bratton announced a plan to clean up Skid Row by, among other things, aggressively enforcing an old "anti-camping" ordinance. By April 2006, the ACLU sued the city of Los Angeles on behalf of Robert Lee Purrie and five other homeless people, arguing that the city was in violation of the 8th and 14th Amendments of the Constitution and sections of the California Constitution guaranteeing due process, equal protection, and prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment. The court ruled in favor of Purrie, finding that "the LAPD cannot arrest people for sitting, lying, or sleeping on public sidewalks in Skid Row."

The court said that the anti-camping ordinance is "one of the most restrictive municipal laws regulating public spaces in the United States."

The ACLU sought a compromise in which the LAPD would be barred from arresting homeless people or confiscating their possession on Skid Row between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:30 a.m. The compromise plan, which was accepted by the city of Los Angeles, permits sleeping on the sidewalk except "within 10 feet of any business or residential entrance" and only between these hours. Downtown development business interests and the Central City Association came out against the compromise. Chief Bratton said the case had slowed the police effort to fight crime and clean up skid row, and that when he was allowed to clean up Skid Row, real estate profited. On September 20, 2006, the Los Angeles City Council voted to reject the compromise. On October 3, 2006, police arrested Skid Row’s transients for sleeping on the streets for the first time in months. On October 10, 2006, under pressure from the ACLU, the city tacitly agreed to the compromise by declining to appeal the court’s decision.

New York cases:

Callahan v. Carey
This case, backed by the Coalition for the Homeless, established that all homeless individuals have the right to emergency shelter. Since the lawsuit was settled in 1981, New York has been obligated to provide emergency shelter for individuals who are homeless by reason of poverty or due to mental, physical, or social
dysfunction. New York is the only city in the United States to currently have this legal protection for the homeless.

McCain v. Koch

The Michael Bloomberg administration in 2008 settled a longstanding class-action lawsuit over homeless families’ access to shelter in New York City. The main lawsuit being settled, McCain v. Koch, was filed in 1983 by the Legal Aid Society to draw attention to the plight of homeless families, after similar lawsuits had been filed over the rights of homeless people. Those lawsuits had resulted in the establishment, unusual in the United States, of a right to shelter in New York City.

The McCain suit argued that the city had failed to provide adequate shelter or develop standards governing shelter for families. The primary plaintiff in the suit was Yvonne McCain, who was evicted from a Brooklyn apartment in 1982 after withholding rent to protest her landlord’s refusal to make repairs.

Under the settlement, the city will regain full control and oversight of its family services system, “no longer having to enforce over 40 highly-detailed court orders or spend precious staff time and agency resources complying with or litigating these cases.” Additionally, the settlement ensured that New York City would continue its long-standing interpretation of state and local laws ensuring safe and decent emergency shelter for homeless families with children. The settlement also includes provisions that outline current agency standards and protocols for assessing shelter eligibility.

In 2004, the City stopped giving homeless families priority for federally funded Section-8 vouchers and proceeded to stumble through a series of replacement programs, including Housing Stability Plus (abandoned in 2007) and Work Advantage. As the homeless numbers skyrocketed, the Bloomberg Administration began denying emergency shelter to re-applicant families in October 2007. This despite the City’s own data showing fully one-third of families who were ultimately found eligible for shelter were forced to re-apply more than once. The combination of denying federal rental subsidies and closing the front door to the shelter system has been an unprecedented disaster for homeless families in NYC.

Youth Shelter

A group of homeless youths sued NY City in January for allegedly failing to provide adequate shelter for thousands of troubled teens living on the streets.

The Brooklyn federal court lawsuit claims that while the city is legally obligated to provide beds for all homeless people ages 16 to 20, it turns away hundreds of applicants every night. With 3,800 kids currently homeless in the city and only 253 shelter beds available, the waiting lists are growing, the suit alleges.

With nowhere else to turn, many homeless teens end up sleeping at the Chelsea Piers or at “Uncle Ace’s,” a term given to the A, C and E subway trains which have long routes. This exposes them to all types of danger, including violence, sex assaults, STDs, and sex trafficking.

The suit states that the New York state law governing the city’s youth shelter system — The New York Runaway and Homeless Youth Act — requires the city to provide a shelter and services to any homeless youth who seeks it.
Best Practice

Housing First Policy

This is an approach to ending homelessness that helps individuals and families return to a living space more rapidly by providing instant access to housing. While all Housing First programs focus on reducing the length of time of homelessness, recidivism, and prevention, the services vary significantly depending on the type of population being served. For people who have experienced chronic homelessness, there is an expectation that intensive services will be needed indefinitely. For most people experiencing homelessness, however, these specialized services are not necessary and will be administered at an as-needed basis.

The vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness after a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless assistance system. For these people, the Housing First approach is ideal, as it helps them access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible without time limits or conditions. This happens by using only a standard lease agreement to the housing, instead of also mandating therapy or some sort of other services compliance. In turn, such clients of the homeless assistance networks need surprisingly little support or assistance to achieve independence, saving the system considerable costs.

Results:
- Chicago- decreased homelessness by 12%
- Norfolk- decreased homelessness by 25%
- San Francisco- chronic homelessness decreased by 28%
- Alameda County- decreased family homelessness by 37%
- Portland- total homeless decreased 13 percent, while the unsheltered count dropped by 39%.

Permanent Supportive Housing

At its root, homelessness is the result of the widening housing affordability gap and the inability to afford and maintain housing. In many cities, the gap has widened significantly because of the loss of hundreds of thousands of units of affordable rental housing coupled with government cutbacks on already inadequate housing assistance for low-income people and has reduced investments in building and preserving affordable housing.

Any plan to end chronic homelessness must incorporate an investment in creating affordable and accessible housing. This includes supportive housing, which is permanent housing coupled with supportive services. This is often used for people experiencing long-term or repeated homelessness who also have mental or physical disabilities.

This program, pioneered in New York City in the 1980s, has proven to be a successful and cost-effective solution to the problem of homelessness. Permanent supportive housing combines affordable housing assistance with vital support services for individuals living with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, or other serious health problems, thus enhancing housing stability for individuals and families with special needs. Moreover, numerous research studies have shown that this program costs less than other forms of emergency and institutional care.
Results:
Quincy-50% decline in the chronically homeless population
Denver- 36% reduction in chronically homelessness population
Norfolk- 25% decline in homeless population
Westchester County, NY- Income supplements for rental assistance reduced family homelessness by 57%.

For Portland and Multnomah County, one of most important developments is the progress on making housing more accessible. Homeless Management Information Systems are operational in 26 homeless service agencies and help to increase the supply of permanent housing available to homeless individuals and families. Total homelessness in Portland has recently decreased by 13 percent, while the unsheltered count dropped by 39%.

A landmark 1990 New York agreement, which was renewed in 2005, is an example of a successful permanent supportive housing initiative that reduced homelessness in New York City and saved taxpayer dollars that would otherwise have been spent on costly shelters and hospitalizations.

Rapid Re-Housing & Service Accessibility
Today, many households who become homeless have already lived in independent permanent housing, and they can generally return and remain stably housed with limited assistance. And homelessness itself is associated with a host of negative consequences that can be minimized by limiting the period of time people experience it. By helping homeless households return to permanent housing as soon as possible, communities have been able to reduce the length of time people remain in homeless shelters. This opens beds for others who need them, and reduces the public and personal costs of homelessness.

Navigating the housing market, especially on behalf of clients with lower incomes and higher needs, is a difficult task. A successful homeless assistance program has housing staff that search local housing markets and build relationships with landlords in order to help with just that. Successful program components include incentives to landlords to rent to homeless households, creative uses of housing vouchers, subsidies to help homeless individuals and families afford their rental unit, and links to resources to help clients maintain their housing.

Families
This strategy is particularly helpful for homeless families, who typically need immediate access to permanent housing because they just got evicted and have no other place to stay. Some unforeseen personal or financial crisis like a death in the family, a medical emergency, or abuse typically causes episodes of family homelessness, which have increased since the Great Recession in 2007. Most families briefly utilize the shelter system until the problem is resolved, then look to move on to a more permanent solution. Diverting funds and resources normally dedicated to the existing shelter system toward rapid re-housing and family services has been shown to reduce family homelessness.
Throughout the country, homeless activists have called for different levels of government to address this housing affordability gap by significantly increasing investments in affordable rental housing, with a significant portion targeted to homeless families and individuals. In addition, they are demanding that officials strengthen rent regulation laws to preserve affordable housing and protect tenants.

Results
Portland has done a great job of this by linking families and unaccompanied youth to supportive housing, medical care, and mental health services. One of the biggest problems with people moving out of homelessness is a lack of income. In order to improve their quality of life, it is tremendously important to connect families and individuals exiting homelessness to programs like TANF, SSI, and Medicaid.

As efforts to end homelessness continue, city and county officials are focusing on immediately moving people into housing, ending the practice of discharging people into homelessness from jails and hospitals, improving outreach, increasing the housing supply, improving the rent assistance system, and increasing economic opportunity for homeless people. Additionally, the city is attempting to bolster opportunities for people in the area by implementing career-based employment services that help formerly homeless people build the skills necessary to increase their income.

Failures: LA’s misguided attempts to militarize Skid Row
In 2006, the city of LA instituted the Safer Cities Initiative, which installed 50 additional officers to a particular five-block area of Skid Row. There were some positive results to this. A year later, crime in the area had gone down 35%, with homicides, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, auto thefts and other crimes all falling. During the same eight-month period preceding the Safer City Initiative, crime dropped only 5%. The Safer Cities Initiative has also produced a high number of arrests and drug seizures. Over 33 pounds of cocaine, 7 pounds of heroin, 200 pounds of marijuana and over $315,000 was also recovered.

But the strategy amounted to in many ways criminalizing homelessness, as it was based on the "broken windows" theory of crime that suggests a connection between neighborhood disorder and serious crime. Under this system, if public order offenses are left unchecked, the social order in the neighborhood will decline and lead to an increase in serious criminal behavior. The LAPD in turn targeted crimes such as public intoxication, drug use, and prostitution, all of which were believed to make the area more inviting to criminals. This may temporarily reduce the numbers of homeless, but it puts a heavy burden on our prison system.
Skid Row Journal (/)

History of Skid Row

By Donald Spivack
Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
September 15, 1998

CRA's role in the history and development of Skid Row Los Angeles. (It is interesting to be part of this project. I think it will be very exciting to assemble everybody’s different perspectives on the development of what we call the “Central City East” area of downtown Los Angeles. Let me start with a brief history of the evolution of the area.)

The Central City East area of downtown Los Angeles is an area of approximately 50 city blocks. It is generally bounded by Third Street on the north, Alameda Street on the east, Seventh Street on the south and Main Street on the west. It is a portion of Greater Downtown, the roughly triangular area bounded by the Pasadena and Harbor Freeways on the west, the Los Angeles River on the north and east, and the Santa Monica Freeway on the south. This boundary includes downtown, with the city’s major high-rise buildings (Bunker Hill and the Financial District); the city’s historic core from both the Spanish era (Olvera Street and El Pueblo State Historic Park) and the American era (Broadway and Spring Streets); the ethnic communities of Chinatown and Little Tokyo; and the large concentration of industrial zones that comprise the garment, produce, seafood, flower and toy centers.

The Central City Area.
When the Spanish first founded Los Angeles in 1781, they sited it near a pre-existing Native American settlement (“Yanga”) along the Los Angeles River a short distance northeast of the current El Pueblo Historic Park at Olvera Street. (The city center was relocated to Olvera Street in 1815 because of repeated flooding at the first site.) Los Angeles’ primary role was as an agricultural station to supply the nearby Spanish Missions. For many years, the area was predominantly agricultural, being on the flood plain of the Los Angeles River and thus fertile for the growing of crops, accessible to a steady water supply, flat enough to be easily built on, and easily accessible to surrounding ranches and to the Missions.

As the city grew south and west from Olvera Street, skirting the Elysian Hills (including what is now downtown’s Bunker Hill), the flood plain in the immediate downtown area -- generally the area east of Main Street -- remained agricultural until the railroads came into Southern California in the 1870’s. That put the railroads on the edge of the emerging downtown, which was developing along Main and Spring Streets and Broadway generally south of First Street. With the coming of the railroads, a number of things happened. The area east of downtown began to evolve from its original agricultural (largely vineyard) nature into an industrial district. It was well-suited for that from the perspective that it was close to the river, now had railroad access, and was pretty much flat land so it was easy to develop with industrial uses -- which initially emerged from the agricultural base that was the city’s economic mainstay.

Even in the early days, a lot of the industrial activity in Los Angeles was seasonal, so there was historically a very large transient population that came to Los Angeles for work. Once the railroads were in place, that population arrived on the trains and was delivered directly into the city’s industrial zone. Much of the industry, even in the early days, was related to agriculture, the primary focus of what was going on in the settlement -- growing, packing and shipping agricultural products including livestock, fruits and vegetables. The railroads themselves, since Los Angeles was a railhead, also generated a transient population in the area made up of the engineers, brakemen and other personnel who operated and managed the trains. They would come in on the train, and they had a couple of days’ layover in the community.
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Development of the SRO Hotels

This temporal population gave rise to the need for, and thus the development of, hotels that provided living space for a primarily single male population coming into Los Angeles for short term or seasonal work. These “single room occupancy” hotels, with their small rooms and communal baths, were affordable temporary places to live. Because the area had predominantly a single adult male population, it attracted services that catered to that population, including small shops; bars, saloons and restaurants; brothels, the forerunners of today’s “dance clubs”; and other social, recreational and meeting places. Some of the organizations that evolved into the social service organizations of today started as organizations to serve a temporary population with cultural, recreational or other diversions and with services which people away from home needed.

In addition, because the area was adjacent to the railroad, and Los Angeles was essentially the end of the railroad in the United States, people who were coming west looking for opportunities would arrive in Los Angeles. They were, again, largely single and primarily male individuals.

Many of them were social misfits, escaping from a less-than-rosy past elsewhere, so they were essentially rootless in Los Angeles. Others were here to seek a fortune and to either form families or bring families from “back east.” So there was a demand for additional social services. These were initially delivered by organizations such as the religious-based missions. Many of the missions that now deliver shelter and other services to the homeless and downtrodden have roots that go back over a hundred years. The missions began to appear as the transient single male population began to grow in the area, here to serve people migrating to Los Angeles looking for an opportunity to find work, settle and either form a family or bring a family from the east, or migrating here to escape a troubled past elsewhere in the United States.

With successive waves of new job opportunities in Los Angeles -- the discovery of petroleum shortly before the end of the 1800’s, the arrival of the film industry shortly after 1900, the beginning of automobile manufacture in the early 1900’s among them -- additional migration occurred. Most of it came first to Central City East since, again, most arrivals were by train. Moreover, the downtown offered the greatest range not only of housing options but also of transit options for access to jobs elsewhere, and was therefore an easy base of operations until housing was found in other locations.

The fact that the hotels were here, and the social services were here, made this area an ideal resting place during the Great Depression of the 1930’s. During this period, there was a substantial migration of individuals coming to the west coast because of lack of employment opportunities elsewhere in the country, and the expectation that Los Angeles had the “pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.” Many people felt that if you got to Los Angeles, life would be good, everything was going to be all right. By and large, it turned out that for a lot of people it wasn’t all right. But, in any event, the area had the missions and the other social services for the population that began to cluster here during the Depression. To a large degree this population consisted of hobos, rail riders and others who migrated from place to place, some in search of work, some simply moving around because of restlessness. Some of these people stayed for longer periods of time, some of them would stay for only a couple of days and then catch the train going somewhere else. Many of these individuals were alcohol addicted, often they were unemployable, and several of the social service organizations focused on “saving” such people.

The role of the area again evolved during the Second World War when Los Angeles was a stopping point for a lot of people coming either to find work in the war industries or to be shipped off to the Pacific. The hotels were a stopping place for people in transit. During this period the missions and other social service organizations were supplemented by organizations that catered to the military personnel who were coming through here. The USO was located in Skid Row. Many of the small theaters, bars, cafés and adult bookstores that are still here trace their roots to that period of time. They have
evolved into the triple X theaters that we see today (they were probably only one X at that time). Again, it all traces back to there being a continuing substantial single male population flowing through here. Moreover, it should be remembered that Los Angeles was a relatively segregated city in the 1940's and many new arrivals were African-American, so their options for places to live were limited to parts of downtown, Watts and a relatively few other communities.