A F T E R
SPRAWL
ACTION PLANS
FOR METROPOLITAN
LOS ANGELES

USC
UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
AFTER SPRAWL
ACTION PLANS FOR METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES

© 2003 Southern California Studies Center

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Southern California Studies Center
University of Southern California
3601 Watt Way GFS 344
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1969
www.usc.edu/sc2

Center for Sustainable Cities
413 Kaprielian Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0255
www.usc.edu/dept/geography/ESPE

Lusk Center for Real Estate
331 Ralph and Goldy Lewis Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0626
www.usc.edu/lusk

USC Urban Initiative
604 Waite Phillips Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031
http://urban.usc.edu

This Report constitutes Volume 5 of the Atlas of Southern California.
AFTER SPRAWL

ACTION PLANS FOR METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES

Summary Report
USC Southern California Studies Center
Moderated by Antonio Villaraigosa & Jennifer Wolch

Principal Authors
William Fulton
Jennifer Wolch
Antonio Villaraigosa
Susan Weaver

Co-Sponsored by:
USC Center for Sustainable Cities
USC Lusk Center for Real Estate

With support from:
USC Urban Initiative
The John Randolph and Dora Haynes Foundation
In 2001, USC’s Southern California Studies Center published Sprawl Hits the Wall: Confronting the Realities of Metropolitan Los Angeles. As a diagnosis of the challenges and dilemmas confronting the region, the report became an instant ‘best-seller,’ and generated a broad consensus that the issues identified in the report were the keys to unlocking a better urban future in the Southland.

Many of our collaborators in the conversations asked a simple question: Now what do we do to achieve a better urban future? The present report attempts to answer this question. It is a synthesis of key policy recommendations that could alter the way we live, and enable us to cope with the continuing growth that is simultaneously part of the California dream, as well as its worst nightmare.

After Sprawl: Action Plans For Metropolitan Los Angeles is based on a series of Urban Policy Seminars held during 2001–2002 at the University of Southern California. The series was sponsored by the Southern California Studies Center (SC2) as part of USC’s Urban Initiative, and co-sponsored by the Center for Sustainable Cities, and the Lusk Center for Real Estate. Additional support was provided by the John Randolph and Dora Haynes Foundation. The seminars themselves were organized and moderated by former California Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, during his yearlong residency as Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Southern California Studies Center, and by Professor of Geography Jennifer Wolch, who also directs USC’s Center for Sustainable Cities.

From the outset, we decided to focus on the difficult issues, and to avoid making ‘laundry-lists’ of impossible dreams. The hard problems we confronted in our discussions and in this report are:

- economic development
- poverty and inequality
- infrastructure renewal
- race and immigration
- environment
- safety and security
- participation in governance.

Our five-point action plan identifies the priority steps that we must take in order to cope with growth – an urgent question, since over the next 30 years, an additional 6 million people will be added to the 17 million who already live here.

The Urban Policy Seminars involved 30 faculty and researchers from USC, 7 from other regional institutions of higher education, and 25 distinguished and experienced practitioners who live and work in the Southland. For each of the study topics, academic experts first met to discuss the nature of the problems confronting the region, and drafted white papers that served as focal points of discussion with community experts. These community practitioners provided critical responses to the white papers, which were subsequently revised and circulated for further comment before being prepared for publication. These seven Supplemental Reports on each seminar topic were drafted by faculty participants and edited by Jennifer Wolch and William Fulton (senior fellow at the Southern California Studies Center, and president
The difficult task of synthesizing the principal lessons learned from the Urban Policy Seminar process fell upon Jennifer Wolch, Bill Fulton, Antonio Villaraigosa, and Susan Weaver, a research associate at Solimar Research Group. From the many hours of taped conversations, and multiple drafts of proposals to better the quality of life in the Southland, Jennifer, Bill, Antonio, and Susan have distilled a concise concept that will help us recover and advance the Southern California dream.

I am deeply grateful to all those who participated in the Urban Policy Seminar series: to moderators Antonio Villaraigosa and Jennifer Wolch who took the initiative in this project, to our academic and community collaborators (a full listing appears on adjacent pages), to those who took on the task of writing the final Supplemental Reports, and to our sponsors without whose support this work would not have been possible. We also appreciate comments and assistance provided by Jim Bickhart of the Southern California Transportation and Land Use Coalition. Thanks to Richard Parks and Dallas Dishman who worked on this project at SC2, and to those who allowed their images to be used to illustrate the report: Dan Avila, Kevin Daly/Daly, Genik Architects, Michael Dear, Geoffrey DeVerteuil, Travis Longcore, Lize Mogel, University of California and the National Information Service for Earthquake Engineering - Berkeley, and Jennifer Wolch.

The Southern California Studies Center (SC2) is a nonpartisan, multidisciplinary research and educational organization that mobilizes the intellectual resources of the University of Southern California to illuminate the distinctive characteristics and dynamics of Southern California, and to foster collaborative dialogue in confronting the challenges and opportunities facing the region. I am grateful for grants from USC's Provost, Lloyd Armstrong Jr., and Joseph Aoun, Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, in support of this work. My greatest hope is that our work will be of assistance to the people of Southern California.

Michael Dear
Director
Southern California Studies Center
Southern California Studies Center Urban Policy Seminar Series

Organized by:
Michael Dear, USC Geography & Southern California Studies Center
Thomas Hollihan, USC Annenberg School for Communication
Karen Lash, USC Law School
Richard Parks, Southern California Studies Center
Jennifer Wolch, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities

Moderators:
Antonio Villaraigosa, Speaker Emeritus, California State Assembly & USC Southern California Studies Center
Jennifer Wolch, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities

After Sprawl: Action Plans For Metropolitan Los Angeles

Principal Authors:
William Fulton, USC Southern California Studies Center & Solimar Research Group
Jennifer Wolch, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities
Antonio Villaraigosa, Speaker Emeritus, California State Assembly & USC Southern California Studies Center
Susan Weaver, Solimar Research Group
Action Plans for Metropolitan Los Angeles: Supplemental Reports #1–7

Series Editors:
Jennifer Wolch, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities
William Fulton, USC Southern California Studies Center & Solimar Research Group

Report #1: Making Regions Work

Principal Author:
Manuel Pastor, UC Santa Cruz, Latino & Latin American Studies

Panelists:
Rafael Bostick, USC Policy, Planning & Development
Stuart Gabriel, USC Lusk Center for Real Estate
Manuel Pastor, UC Santa Cruz, Latino & Latin American Studies
Gregory Treverton, RAND Corp.

Respondents:
Denise Fairchild, CD Tech
Lee Harrington, Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation
Jonathan Katz, Cinnabar California Inc.

Report #2: Growing Together

Panelists & Contributors:
Michael Cousineau, USC Public Health
Gary Dymski, UC Riverside Economics
Jacquelyn McCroskey, USC Social Work
Madeleine Stoner, USC Social Work
Jennifer Wolch, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities

Respondents:
Bong Hwan Kim, Multicultural Collaborative
Timothy Johnston, LA Archdiocese Justice & Peace Commission
Barbara Masters, California Endowment
Ruth Schwartz, Shelter Partnership
Report #3: Strengthening Metropolitan Infrastructure

PANELISTS:
Steve Erie, UC San Diego, Political Science
William Dutton, USC Annenberg School
Genevieve Giuliano, USC Policy, Planning & Development
Anthony Michaels, USC Biological Sciences & Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies

RESPONDENTS:
David Abel, The Planning Report
Jack Bayliss, CH2M-Hill
Cliff Gladstein, Gladstein Associates
James Ortner, Orange County Transportation Authority

Report #4: Rethinking Immigration & Race

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR:
Laura Pulido, USC Geography & American Studies

PANELISTS:
Regina Freers, Occidental College, Politics
Niels Frenzen, USC Law
Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, USC Sociology
Dowell Myers, USC Policy, Planning & Development
Laura Pulido, USC Geography & American Studies

RESPONDENTS:
Angelica Salas, Executive Director, CHIRLA
Thomas Saenz, Vice President, MALDEF
Robin Toma, Executive Director, LA County Commission on Human Relations

Report #5: Building the Green Metropolis

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR:
Stephanie Pincetl, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities

PANELISTS:
Andrea Hricko, USC Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center
Linwood Pendelton, USC School of International Relations & Environmental Studies
Stephanie Pincetl, USC Geography & Center for Sustainable Cities
Stefanos Polyzoides, Moule Polyzoides & USC Architecture

RESPONDENTS:
Dean Kubani, Santa Monica Sustainable City Program
Andy Lipkis, The TreePeople
Mitchell Menzer, O’Melveny & Myers
Report #6: Living in Safety

**Panelists & Contributors**

Jody Armor, USC Law
Thomas Jordan, USC Earth Sciences & Southern California Earthquake Center
Najmedin Meshkati, USC Civil Engineering
David Sloane, USC Policy, Planning & Development
Diego Vigil, UC Irvine, Social Ecology

**Respondents**:

Father Gregory Boyle, Director, Jobs for a Future & Homeboy Industries
Lou Hubaud, Director of Systems Safety, MTA
Nick Miller, Deputy Director, Police Assessment Resource Center
Ellis M. Stanley, Sr. General Manager, LA City Emergency Preparedness Department

Report #7: Engaging Communities in Governance

**Principal Author**:

Juliet Musso, USC Policy, Planning & Development

**Panelists**:

Erwin Chemerinsky, USC Law
Juliet Musso, USC Policy, Planning & Development
Michael Preston, USC Political Science
Raphael Sonenshein, CSU Fullerton, Politics

**Respondents**:

Karen Bass, Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention
Bill Boyarsky, USC Political Science & Former City Editor, Los Angeles Times
Bill Christopher, LA City Board of Neighborhood Commissioners
Dorothy Green, Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Five-Point Action Plan For Metropolitan L.A.

GROW SMARTER: As the region runs out of land, we must learn to use our land and resources better and more efficiently to accommodate future growth.

- Level the Playing Field for Infill Development
- Encourage Housing Construction and Homeownership
- Manage the Car

GROW SAFER: As we continue to add population in existing neighborhoods and communities, it becomes imperative to improve their safety.

- Connect Public Safety to the Neighborhood
- Balance Gang Suppression with Prevention and Intervention
- Improve Safety in Transportation
- Prioritize Earthquake Preparedness

GROW GREENER: The region’s metropolitan development in the 20th Century inflicted great harm on the natural environment. In order to sustain metropolitan L.A. in the 21st Century, we must actively focus on restoring the natural environment rather than merely refraining from damaging it more.

- Conserve Energy and Natural Resources
- Promote Environmental Justice
- Make the Metropolis More Permeable

GROW TOGETHER: As our region has expanded, it has also grown inequitably. The gap between rich and poor has become wider, as has the gap between the well-being of different communities in the region. In the 21st Century, our growth must be more equitably distributed, both economically and geographically.

- Narrow the Economic Divide
- Promote Equitable Economic Development at the Regional Level
- Connect Neighborhoods to Regional Job Opportunities

GROW MORE CIVIC Minded: We cannot accomplish any of the other four goals without nurturing greater civic-mindedness and commitment among the people of our region, especially immigrants and others often excluded from participation in public affairs.

- Broaden Civic Involvement
- Know More about the Region and Its Communities
- Create Benchmarks to Measure Progress
INTRODUCTION

Why A New Urban Policy Action Plan Is Needed in Metropolitan Los Angeles

Throughout most of the 20th Century, American urban policy was based on the experiences of older and more traditional cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. These cities were densely concentrated at their centers, with sprawling suburbs on the edge and poor ethnic populations and communities of color locked in specific geographical areas, mostly in large, older central cities with a declining tax base.

Los Angeles does not fit this model. In the early 21st Century, Los Angeles is emerging as the prototypical American metropolis—combining a set of characteristics that have rarely been seen before in urban America, but are likely to become more common in the future. These include:

- **A population that is large yet still growing.** The five-county metropolitan Los Angeles region is approaching 17 million people and still growing at a rate of 200,000 to 300,000 persons per year.

- **An urban form that is both low-rise and dense.** Metro L.A. remains a mostly low-rise, auto-oriented region. Yet, at the regional level, it is also the densest metropolis in the United States, as more and more people occupy the existing urban footprint.

- **An ethnically diverse population.** Metro L.A. is the melting pot of 21st Century America. No one ethnic group is predominant in the region. Native-born Americans of all races continue to play an important role. And immigrants from Asia and Latin America are emerging as a driving force in cultural diversity and economic growth.

- **A diverse economy.** After the fallout from the recession of the early 1990s, metro L.A. has emerged as one of the most diverse economies in the nation, ranging from high tech to entertainment to garment manufacturing to warehousing and distribution. These employment centers are not based in any one area but are spread throughout the region.

- **A widening divide between rich and poor.** As the regional economy recovers from recession, not everyone benefits equally. Disparities in income are growing along lines of race, class, and geography.

- **A fragile ecology.** Metro L.A. is scattered across a coastal plain, mountain ranges, and a series of interior valleys that constitute an unusually varied and fragile series of ecosystems. Many of these ecosystems have already been destroyed or devastated by agricultural and urban development. However, many still survive, in whole or in part, and form an invaluable green matrix for metropolitan life.

- **A fragmented political system.** Although metro L.A. has a large central city, the vast majority of people live in the region’s 177 cities—many of them very small—and almost half of them live in outlying counties. In addition, metropolitan Los Angeles is governed by more than 1,000 special districts that provide specific government services.

Clearly, traditional urban policy—modeled on declining metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest—will not suffice in a metropolitan area that is so vibrant and varied and yet filled with so many challenges. Therefore, a new urban policy action plan is required for metro L.A.—one that recognizes the realities of the region and can serve as a prototype for regions undergoing similar dynamics of growth and change in the 21st Century.
Metropolitan Los Angeles will continue to grow in the 21st Century—adding population and jobs, expanding and improving public infrastructure, and constructing new real estate developments in both new and existing urban locations. But the metropolis does not have the cheap and expansive land resources that have historically been available. And as existing areas become denser, we will no longer be able to rely on our traditional suburban assumptions about how we use land, transportation facilities, and the other raw material that makes up the hardware of urban life.

Los Angeles and Orange Counties do not have enough developable land to accommodate expected growth in the next 20 years. Outward urban growth still continues on the fringes. But even in these outlying areas, most of the remaining undeveloped land is either too mountainous to accommodate major development or has been reserved by government policies.

Most of the region’s developable open space is owned by the federal government. Endangered species preservation efforts are likely to set aside well over a half-million acres of land. Agricultural preservation efforts in Ventura County have set aside 100,000 acres of land that could otherwise have been developed into urban communities. In areas on the metropolitan fringe where land is still available—such as southern Orange County, the Santa Clarita Valley, and the Temecula Valley in Riverside County—some growth is likely to occur. But these are battleground areas. The only part of the region with a large amount of unconstrained land is the high desert, which is environmentally fragile, has the harshest climate in the region, and is located far from most job centers.

Other natural resources required for urban growth, such as water, are dwindling as well. Many of the region’s groundwater aquifers are either overdrawn or contaminated. All of the region’s imported water sources are under threat—the Los Angeles aqueduct from the Owens Valley, the State Water Project’s aqueduct from Northern California, and the Metropolitan Water District’s aqueduct from the Colorado River. Moreover, an increasing share of the water supply will be required to protect and restore critical habitat. All these trends mean that metropolitan Los Angeles must accommodate a continually growing population in the decades ahead, but with less water than is now available, limited resources for extending water and sewer infrastructure, and with land supply constraints on outward expansion.

Therefore, instead of simply growing outward, as we have done in the past, we will be required to grow smarter by improving our regional patterns and reinforcing existing communities. Growing smarter will require the region to focus on three overall strategies.
A. Level the Playing Field for Infill Development

Even as metropolitan Los Angeles is running out of land, most of our policies at the regional and local level discourage further investment in existing areas and encourage sprawl at the metropolitan fringe. We must undertake to level the playing field, so that land in existing urban areas is re-used in a manner that is economically efficient and can improve the quality of life of the people who live in those areas. Moreover, we need to demonstrate that higher density infill urban communities merit the support of the region’s residents instead of the opposition that so often accompanies infill proposals. This can best be accomplished through a series of policy changes that include:

■ Resolve liability issues that make it difficult to redevelop urban brownfields.
■ Remove obstacles to infill development from zoning codes in existing urban communities.
■ Streamline environmental review and other decision-making processes for urban infill projects that meet existing planning requirements.
■ Discourage new development on the metropolitan fringe through land-use policies, differential infrastructure pricing, and open space acquisition.
■ Encourage infill developments that offer elegant design, convenience, and a full range of environmental and cultural amenities.

B. Encourage Housing Construction and Homeownership

In spite of continuing population growth in metropolitan Los Angeles, we are not producing enough housing overall, and in particular we are not building the right type of housing in the right location for working-poor and working-class populations. We must make a regional commitment to dealing with the housing issue. In particular, we must commit ourselves to reversing the public policy incentives that currently discourage the construction of moderate-income housing in existing urban locations. The required policy changes include:

■ Change state-local fiscal policy to reward—rather than punish—local governments for building housing. Local governments currently “lose money” providing services for low- and moderate-income housing.
■ Eliminate prejudicial lending policies by the Federal Housing Administration, which in metropolitan Los Angeles appear to favor newer suburbs rather than more racially mixed older suburbs.
■ Provide selected subsidies to increase the supply of housing for moderate-income residents in critical parts of the region—for example, for essential public sector employees so they can live in the same communities where they work.
■ Take maximum advantage of existing public subsidy programs, such as trust funds, by creating revolving credit programs that encourage a re-circulation of existing housing subsidy funds.
C. Manage the Car

Even as our region becomes more dense and more crowded—and more and more residents are stuck in a “working poor” situation—Southern California is still car-oriented. Growing smarter requires the entire region to make a conscious effort to deal with transportation issues—not by surrendering to the car or making ill-fated efforts to eliminate it, but by managing the car carefully, providing alternatives for those who need them, and focusing growth to support transit corridors. Managing the car requires a series of policy changes in the region, including the following:

- Create more realistic pricing for fuel, roads, and parking. Steps could include taxing drivers directly on fuel only (rather than indirectly through sales tax), charging tolls on more roads, and charging drivers more frequently for the full cost of parking.
- Focus public transit services on the working poor, who often need it most because they do not have cars, rather than on more affluent citizens who tend to utilize suburban commuter trains that are more expensive on a per rider basis to subsidize.
- Strengthen the region’s public transit corridors (bus, light rail, subway) by supporting transit-oriented housing and commercial development.
- Help low income residents have access to cars when they have no alternatives, perhaps through “car-sharing” mechanisms that have been introduced in other cities.

The Gold Line links downtown Los Angeles with Highland Park and Pasadena.

Building dense yet elegant housing on transit corridors can reduce reliance on cars.
All people should be able to lead their day-to-day lives in safety. But in Southern California’s metropolitan environment, residents face a daunting array of hazards that can threaten their security and well-being. As we grow by filling in rather than by expanding out, we must learn how to make our communities, neighborhoods, and region safer for the long term. Without safety throughout the region, and especially in our existing neighborhoods, we will not be able to prosper—or to grow in a different way.

The hazard with the highest profile is undoubtedly crime. Each year in the City of Los Angeles alone several hundred residents are murdered, and many thousands more fall victim to other forms of violence and property crime. Gang-related crime is an especially critical issue, profoundly affecting the quality of life in communities claimed as gang territories. As a result, a significant proportion of the region’s residents fear that crime will affect them, their families and neighbors.

Urban transportation systems—nowhere of more importance than in far-flung Southern California—can also pose safety hazards. Transportation-related incidents are among the leading cause of fatal work-related injuries the United States. Railroad crossing accidents, for instance, are major contributors to this carnage; in Southern California, 53 fatalities have been attributed to the operation of the 10-year old MTA Blue Line light rail alone. Transportation systems and other metropolitan-wide systems are also vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

The natural environment poses a very different set of urban safety issues in Southern California. Among natural hazard events, few can disrupt the region’s way of life and economy more than large earthquakes. Earthquakes destroy buildings, transportation lifelines, and communication systems, and have secondary—though often very damaging—effects such as soil liquefaction, landslides, tsunamis, and fires. And just as the incidence of crime varies significantly from place to place within the region so does the risk of natural hazards.
We should seek to improve safety in our region in three different ways:

A. Connect Public Safety to the Neighborhood

Our entire region’s public safety infrastructure should connect with communities and neighborhoods through community policing and other techniques that honor neighborhoods and residents. Unless the residents of metropolitan Los Angeles feel connected to methods that are used to protect their safety, they will not trust them and will not claim them as “their own.” The effort to connect communities and police should take several forms, including:

- Improve community-police relations by encouraging informal interactions between residents and police officers so that residents are empowered to work effectively with police officers, and officers treat residents as respected individuals.
- Decentralize police services through use of district police units and other methods of devolution to neighborhood levels to increase responsiveness to locally perceived problems.
- Focus on crime prevention and problem-solving through use of joint police-resident working groups to identify the precursors to criminal acts and to provide small-scale community improvement programs to eliminate situations that invite crime.

B. Balance Gang Suppression with Prevention and Intervention

Many neighborhoods currently suffer the negative impacts of criminal activities conducted by gang members. Existing measures to deal with the problems created by the presence of gangs within communities fail to provide adequate remedies, and may only displace crime to adjacent areas. Moreover, current strategies based primarily on suppression are costly. Therefore, our approach to gangs must strike a better balance between suppression, prevention and intervention, through several measures:

- Educate the public about roots of gang involvement in order to make residents aware of the links between gangs and other social problems, and engage their support in creating a balanced strategy for addressing gang-related problems.
Develop a participatory problem-solving strategy for addressing gangs, based on detailed analysis of both why youth get involved in gangs, and how gangs access firearms.

Create interagency policing units, with strong ties to community organizations, to target gang-related crime, focus efforts on those gangs and gang members responsible for the largest share of homicides and other violent crimes, and remove the worst offenders from the streets.

Link suppression efforts with community-based prevention and intervention programs. Provide children in gang-affected neighborhoods with a continuum of activities based in schools, as well as community-based and local public facilities such as parks, recreation centers, and libraries.

C. Improve Safety in Transportation

As our region becomes denser, transportation safety will become a more important issue. In particular, we increasingly see safety issues associated with the interface between different modes of transportation—cars, trains, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Our region should launch a major effort to improve transportation safety so that all these modes (necessary for both ecological and economic health) can coexist in a dense urban fabric. This goal can be pursued with a wide variety of actions, including the following:

- Transportation safety should be made a higher priority by educating the public and policymakers about the hazards associated with transportation facilities, so that safe public behavior around mass transit systems becomes second nature to the region’s drivers, transit riders, and pedestrians.
- Community-based safety assessments of transportation facilities and safety ‘hot spots’ should be required, as should safety impact reports, as part of the environmental review process.
- The region should encourage enhanced cooperation and coordination around safety issues among transportation agencies and related organizations. The way transportation systems are operated and regulated should be given equal (or even sometimes more) priority than the other ‘technical’ or hardware-related considerations, since most transportation accidents are the result of human factors rather than technological failure.
D. Prioritize Earthquake Preparedness

Earthquake preparedness remains a major safety issue. Since we do not have the ability to accurately predict earthquakes, we must work on reducing the exposure of our population and the vulnerability of our built environment. This can best be done by taking the following steps:

- Lower vulnerability through more earthquake-resilient design. Targeted investment is required to modernize codes in light of new estimates of regional and local variations in seismic hazards, as well as uncertainties in and improvements to hazard estimates, and to ensure that essential activities can safely continue inside buildings following a quake.
- Improve information systems, analysis, and public education regarding earthquakes, to better prepare the region and its population for earthquakes and to improve our ability to cope with them when they occur.
- Public and private resources should be prioritized so that important buildings required in emergency situations (such as hospitals) should be targeted for retrofits soon. If such facilities are not targeted for upgrades, they may face abandonment, thus harming the region’s emergency safety net.

*Hospital facilities suffered extensive damage in the 1994 Northridge earthquake.*
Throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, our region was urbanized based on the assumption that engineering could alter human systems and consume natural resources with little regard for sustaining the region’s ecological assets. But Southern California exists in a fragile ecology. Despite remarkable progress in cleaning up Southern California’s environment, the challenges of pollution, loss of natural habitat, and species endangerment are profound.

The region fails to meet air and water quality standards. It faces critical problems of groundwater contamination, storm runoff and coastal ocean pollution. And it must somehow find the resources required to clean-up scores of hazardous waste sites. We also confront the task or restoring our green ‘infrastructure’: the region’s watersheds, wetlands, forests and other ecosystems that moderate urban temperatures, improve air and water quality, absorb runoff, and provide other critical ‘services’ such as waste assimilation.

As a region we have been slow to discuss how we can transition toward a more sustainable way of life. A sustainable city is one that can meet current human and ecosystem needs without compromising the welfare of future generations, in ways that are economically efficient, socially just, and respectful of limits on natural resources and the waste assimilation capacities of the environment. While cities are most often seen as villains in the despoiling of a pristine nature, the population concentration and densities of metropolitan regions can in fact encourage efficient resource utilization and habitat conservation.
A. Conserve Energy and Natural Resources

We will be better able to sustain our region’s economic prosperity and its population if we use less energy and fewer natural resources. We should adopt a regional strategy placing a high priority on such methods as trash recycling, water conservation and reclamation, and the more efficient use of land, electricity, and fuel that includes the following steps:

- Metro L.A. should commit itself to becoming a national leader in recycling and reusing all manufactured material and natural resources. This effort should include not just household trash but also our stockpile of discarded electronic equipment; natural resources used in our metropolis such as water (which can be reclaimed and reused before it is disposed of); and urban land (which can be cleaned up and reused rather than “laying fallow”).
- The region’s budding expertise in green technology and building should be highlighted as a touchstone of its economic development strategy, and green technology should become a key part of the region’s export base.
- Local and state tax policy should be revised and coordinated to encourage conservation—for example, by expanding requirements and incentives for the use of ‘green building’ practices, and imposing additional taxes and charges on fuel-inefficient vehicles. This measure could be part of a revision of the state’s entire fuel-taxation system.
- Public education programs should be launched, around careful disposal and reuse of all materials, including not just household trash but natural resources and toxic material that should not be introduced into the waste stream.
B. Promote Environmental Justice

As our region becomes more dense and populous, we must also ensure that the benefits and burdens of growing greener are equitably distributed. We must ensure that older and less prosperous communities are not disproportionately exposed to pollution and other hazards, and that they have access to parks, open space, beaches, and other ecological amenities. This can be done by undertaking many steps, including the following:

- In all areas, public policy should routinely address environmental justice issues (as measured by cumulative exposure to pollution and access to amenities) to ensure greater geographical and economic equity in these areas. Among other things, communities affected by regional truck and rail pollution should be buffered better from the hazards associated with these activities.
- Locally undesired facilities that are nonetheless critical must be equitably distributed through fair-share provisions which ensure that all communities shoulder some of the burden. This will have the dual impact of addressing historic inequities and stimulating the search for alternatives—both technological and social—that minimize negative impacts of such facilities.
- Local neighborhoods should be encouraged to participate directly in design, redesign, management, and maintenance of local parks and green spaces through incentives such as small grants to local neighborhood associations, local schools, and neighborhood councils for park maintenance and programming.
- Residents in older and poorer communities should have better access to the region’s natural and recreational resources. This can be accomplished by improving transportation alternatives to mountains and beaches and restoring lost natural resources, such as rivercourses, that are near where they live.
Many of our most severe ecological problems emerge from the fact that we have paved our metropolis. We can create a much less harsh and more sustainable urban environment—and improve human and environmental health—by taking steps to make the city’s surface more permeable and able to absorb storm water and dry weather runoff. These steps include:

■ Create incentives for major tree planting programs, and use more permeable surfaces in urban development in all situations. Many paved surfaces—parking lots, alleyways, sidewalks, playing fields, driveways and some streets—receive only moderate to mild use, and yet are paved to standards that can accommodate heavy vehicular traffic.

■ Create more small-scale parks and open space areas that would allow people 1/4-mile walking radius access throughout the city and region. Their use as neighborhood hubs for town hall meetings, farmers’ markets, and other community events should be promoted. These open space networks could be publicly acquired to reclaim underutilized and often neglected spaces, and developed through structured partnerships with community-based organizations.

■ Capture pollution at its source through such techniques as high-quality streetsweeping equipment, onsite recycling of water and other resources, using biology-based alternatives for wastewater treatment, and collection of household toxic waste.

Conventional parking lots can be transformed into cooler, greener places that absorb urban runoff and emit less pollution.
Regions that grow more equitably are generally more prosperous. Southern California has absorbed a diverse population and added jobs quickly, but the divide between rich and poor—and the divide between different parts of the region—has grown.

If social capital is the glue that keeps a region moving forward, then inequality, poverty, and social tension are likely to weaken this bond. Conversely, research demonstrates that cities doing the best job of reducing central city-suburban inequality and income polarization grow faster on a per capita basis. When everyone perceives a chance of winning, economic development can be seen outside a ‘zero sum’ framework.

Unfortunately, the history of metropolitan Los Angeles shows that, despite periods of strong regional growth and the proven ability of the region to attract investment and workers, resources do not flow evenly to all places and spaces. Large parts of the region face unmet social needs and economic stagnation and are left to languish; racial disparities in economic well-being widen; and homelessness is mounting. In short, Southern California grows, but fails to “grow together.”

“Growing together” would require reducing the region’s disparities across lines of race, class, and geography. It would more evenly distribute income flows and opportunities for education and training. It would increase social justice and individual welfare. More than just growing, “growing together” is a critical part to the long term, overall economic health of the metropolitan area.

Schools are vitally important in preparing students of all races and ethnicities, classes and localities, to build a more socially just regional future.
A. Narrow the Economic Divide

The region cannot grow in a healthy way unless we alter our public policies to narrow the income divide. Recent population growth and immigration, combined with economic growth patterns stimulated by this available labor pool, have rendered the region more divided in economic terms than ever before. The region should seek to narrow this divide and increase economic opportunity for residents of modest means through the following steps:

- We must strengthen the social and economic infrastructure required for lower-income workers. This involves child-care resources and health insurance as well as housing and transportation, which can be dealt with partly through the “Grow Smarter” agenda.
- The region should work with the state government to close the income divide through state tax and spending policy, including such steps as raising the state minimum wage and ensuring that workers of modest means take full advantage of state and federal programs (such as the Earned Income Tax Credit).
- Throughout the region, we should work to improve public health systems, which are declining in quality, to improve the safety net for those without health insurance. This effort should include providing low-income workers with access to public health insurance programs such as Medi-Cal, as well restoring fiscal solvency and better management to public health institutions currently in crisis.
- Investment in youth—the region’s future labor force—should focus on improving the education system. In addition, the region should lead efforts to invest in a wide variety of community-based programs aimed at youth, to augment schooling, and prevent involvement in criminal activity. Efforts to develop alternative forms of “justice”, including restorative justice, for youthful offenders may also reduce incarceration rates.
- The region needs to develop new homelessness prevention programs, since a growing number of people are precariously housed. Governments and nonprofit organizations should partner to fill gaps in the continuum of care—both geographic, and by service type—designed to help those who are already on the streets rejoin the mainstream.

Camino Nuevo Academy, a charter school built on the site of an obsolete mini-mall in central LA, provides a high quality environment for learning.
B. Connect Neighborhoods
to Regional Job Opportunities

Residents of many older neighborhoods are isolated by distance from the wealth of opportunities in the regional economy. We must link the working poor to job opportunities throughout the region, while at the same time linking growing companies to the emerging work force in older neighborhoods through steps such as the following:

- Regional leaders should identify and work with businesses in low-wage industries to assist them in maintaining their employment bases since decline in these industries will disproportionately harm low-wage workers.

- Regional economic development efforts should also identify growing businesses and industries that can best take advantage of the emerging work force and ensure a geographical match between them—either by assisting those businesses in locating near the work force, creating more housing opportunities for the labor force near emerging job centers, or insuring that a significant share of jobs associated with publicly supported development projects is reserved for unemployed or underemployed residents.

- Welfare-to-work programs should assist in creating highly targeted matches between skill development and work activity. In particular, they should create tailored job training programs and business development efforts based on neighborhood and community-level labor market information that can take advantage of local workers’ skills and local disposable income.
C. Promote Equitable Economic Development at the Regional Level

Regional economic development often focuses on big-ticket items without focusing on who the winners and losers are. The region should take steps to ensure that regional economic development strategies are both economically and geographically balanced, especially in planning and building these big-ticket items, such as airports. These issues can be addressed through a variety of means including:

- Create a Regional Economic Development Strategy Council to establish economic development benchmarks and targets, identify ‘high road’ strategies for sectoral and job growth, and provide opportunities for small business and the region’s budding union movement to more effectively inform economic development planning efforts.
- Revamp the state-local tax system so that local communities throughout the region are encouraged to pursue industrial and job development, rather than just retail development. This could best be accomplished by increasing the property tax “payoff” of development and decreasing the sales tax “payoff”.
- Create a more geographically equitable regional airport system. LAX will continue to be the region’s primary airport for the foreseeable future, especially for passenger traffic. But in the long-term, the region must take advantage of Ontario Airport and former military airports in inland locations to develop additional capacity, especially for air cargo.
Community involvement in the civic life of Southern California cities, counties, and the region as a whole, appears to be extremely low. Low voter turnout is a reflection of this, as are simmering secession movements. Such lack of engagement has far-reaching implications for the quality and fairness of public decision-making, and our ability to grapple with the myriad challenges—economic, social, and environmental—that currently face the region.

The challenge is to convince more people that participation will benefit them individually or collectively. Within a large metropolitan region, this requires creating new mechanisms within local government, forging approaches to connect local areas (neighborhoods and communities) to the larger region, and devising new ways to incorporate poor people and recent immigrants—so-called ‘emerging populations’—into what have historically been middle-class arenas for participation in civic affairs.

Civic engagement is especially challenging in metropolitan Los Angeles because the region is so fragmented, so integrated into the global service/information economy, so rapidly growing, and so diverse. While much discourse in Los Angeles has recently focused on secession, and on counter-proposals such as a borough system, there is a clear need to think more systematically about alternatives to build civic engagement in the region. Such engagement is not the end of a planning or policy-making process, but instead an integral part of that process that requires investment of resources in community organizing and outreach focused toward involvement of residents, particularly poor people and recent immigrants, in decisions about the future of their localities and the region as a whole.

All other efforts will not be sustainable if the people of the region are not engaged in the processes of understanding the region’s choices and helping to make them. The region must make a commitment to creating the knowledge required to make good decisions, communicating that knowledge to the public, and giving citizens the tools to use that knowledge well.
A. Broaden Civic Involvement

As emerging populations, especially immigrants, become more important in Southern California, they must also be involved in and connected to civic and political life in the entire region. We must encourage government-community partnerships for greater civic involvement, use regionwide institutions such as faith-based organizations and unions to bring people together, and experiment with democratic processes that encourage people to participate.

■ Some communities in the region should experiment with ways to involve a broader range of populations in decision-making. These experiments might include using proportional representation and instant run-off voting systems. This should be combined with regional efforts to inform and educate emerging populations and reduce their fear and distrust of community decision-making processes.

■ Regional leaders should find ways to extend the Los Angeles experiment in “neighborhood councils” to other parts of the region. This experiment should focus on down-shifting power and resources to the lowest possible level for the purposes of resolving local issues, as well as enlisting neighborhoods in the solution of regional issues (especially those involving the fair-share distribution of affordable housing, homeless services, job centers, etc.).

■ At the same time, regional leaders should make a renewed effort to involve local communities and active citizens in regional decision-making processes. This effort might include regional forums in local communities, enhanced efforts at regional visioning, and the creation of some kind of regional citizen forum—made of up of stakeholders as well as local government officials—to address regional issues.
B. Know More about the Region and its Communities

Despite its size and sophistication, our region still does not have the knowledge base required to make good decisions. We must commit to improving our knowledge base about the region and then acting on that knowledge by taking the following steps:

- We should improve regional data collection and dissemination, build regional geographic information systems, and make data more easily accessible to researchers, community advocates and smaller scale governments. These efforts are underway in a piecemeal fashion throughout the region but it is not always easy to “put the pieces together.”
- Once these data are available, we should use them to inform and direct both regional and local efforts. We must measure results and ensure accountability by creating shared databases and producing understandable score-cards in order to help people focus on key priorities and recognize essential differences across communities.

C. Create Benchmarks to Measure Progress

In addition to creating more knowledge, we must use that knowledge to set benchmarks—goals for the region and its people to meet, so we can use our knowledge to measure progress. This can be accomplished in many ways, but on a regional level the most important strategy is the following:

- The region should develop multidimensional and cross-cutting measures of regional outcomes. For example, a measure of economic development should assess the extent to which job and business creation simultaneously help or hurt the achievement of other important regional goals, especially social justice and sustainability. Compared to conventional indicators of progress, such measures can better guide decisions shaping the future path and character of growth.

Neighborhood identity is strong in many parts of metropolitan LA, providing a basis for community organizing and participation.
Coming Together to Build a Smarter, Safer, Greener, Fairer Metropolis

Los Angeles is one of the most dynamic metropolises in the world. Few other urban areas have the remarkable combination of public and private resources that are available in Southern California—vast financial resources, a large population with skill and energy, a strong and deep economic infrastructure, a spectacular natural setting, and a worldwide cachet. Indeed, very few cities in the United States have as much capacity to deal with and solve their urban problems.

Yet metropolitan Los Angeles also faces enormous challenges associated with the region’s continued growth, prosperity, safety, and the economic and geographical balance among different parts of the region. Because our region is so big yet so dense, so vibrant yet so divided, we face a set of urban and metropolitan problems that are very different from those that have traditionally confronted American cities and suburbs.

We have chosen to use the word “growing” to describe how the region must change in five different areas—smarter, safer, greener, together, and civic-minded. “Growth” can be a charged and polarizing term in Southern California because it implies more people, more jobs, more houses, more cars—more of things that some people support and some people oppose.

But “growth” can also have a different meaning. It can mean evolving in a positive way toward a better understanding of what we as a region—and as people—must do to be successful. Because metropolitan Los Angeles is a different kind of urban region than the United States has seen before—and because it has changed so rapidly—there are few signposts along the way to guide us. But if we come together around a different kind of action plan, we can succeed in our own metropolis and provide a roadmap for other urban areas in the nation.