Issues and Opportunities Report: Highland Park Station

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Acknowledgements

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The numerous residents of the Highland Park community who spent part of their valuable time answering our questions. Their contributions are appreciated.

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Executive Summary

The Issues and Opportunities Report: Highland Park is part of a set reports analyzing the potential for transit-oriented development (TOD) at four Gold Line stations, identifying potential sites for TOD, and developing TOD alternatives that best suit the station areas. Each report identifies the issues and opportunities for its station area, which is land within a ½-mile radius of the light rail station.

The Highland Park station design is at a pedestrian scale with good access and visibility. Even though the Gold Line ridership has barely reached 50 percent of projected figures (MTA), the Highland Park station ranks better than most other stations in ridership boardings and alightings. The station is situated in a potentially great location for redevelopment.

The findings for the Highland Park station yield opportunities to further TOD, create infill housing development, create pedestrian corridors, enhance community development, and expand the vision for Highland Park; thus, transforming Highland Park into a vital community within the region. The issues identified by the study are pedestrian safety, gentrification, and low levels of ridership on the Gold Line. The study recommends revising the Avenue 57 TOD specific plan in order to expand the vision for Highland Park and allow TOD projects that would aid in reaching the station area goal and opportunities. Such recommendations seek to enhance and include all of the stakeholders of this very active community in the community development process.

In conclusion, Highland Park has great potential to accomplish many of the opportunities outlined by the study, yet the process should be mutually performed by all the stakeholders of Highland Park to further the economic development and community revitalization aspects of the community development process.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Highland Park Station is one of thirteen stations on the Gold Line corridor. Preliminary studies were conducted on all stations to determine the potential for transit-oriented development (TOD) by California State Polytechnic University, Pomona students of Urban and Regional Planning. These studies identified the Highland Park Station as a station with such potential. Therefore, it was selected for further study and this report is the product of such study.

The report is broken down into nine chapters, the first three of which serve as an introduction to the station and the surrounding area to increase understanding of the findings discussed in the later chapters. Chapter 2 is an analysis of the station area; the study analyzes the built environment and the planning policies affecting such environment, creates a socio-economic profile, and seeks to identify community stakeholders. Chapter 3 is a station analysis report; it serves primarily to set into context the design scale of the station and its functionality. Chapter 4 identifies the most critical issues the study finds and identifies opportunities in the station area. Chapter 5 displays the various perspectives among the Highland Park community stakeholders. Chapter 6 proposes goals and objectives for the station area. Chapter 7 identifies potential TOD sites within the station area. Chapter 8 presents the TOD alternatives that the study developed. Chapter 9 recommends a TOD alternative and further development steps needed to successfully accomplish the goal and objectives of the station area.

The report serves its purpose of identifying the potential for TOD in Highland Park, identifying sites that would be suitable for TOD, and developing TOD alternatives that seek to identify the best TOD practice for Highland Park. Throughout the process, the team sought the participation of all the community stakeholders and their views and values where taken into consideration.
CHAPTER 2. STATION AREA ANALYSIS

The Highland Park station is situated in the City of Los Angeles. Chapter 2 identifies the various aspects of the station area. The study identifies the station area as being all the land within a ½-mile radius of the station. The goal of this chapter is to set the background information needed to assess the potential for community development within the station area.

2.1 Historical Background

Highland Park exhibits a rich history that dates back to the original settlers of the area, the Chumash Indians. However, Spanish settlers moved into the area during the mid-late 18th Century. Spain founded and incorporated the area as the Pueblo de la Reina de la Margen Del Rio de la Porciuncula, presently known as the City of Los Angeles. In 1784, Jose Maria Verdugo was granted 36,000 acres of land by Spanish rulers, which he named “Rancho San Raphael” (Taylor 2004). In 1869, a group of developers, who sub-divided the land into 31 parcels, purchased the majority of the Rancho San Raphael, 32,500 acres. The arrival of the railroad by the late 19th Century caused a real estate development boom in the area because now there was a connection between downtown Los Angeles and the east part of the county (City of Pasadena). In 1885, another group of developers composed of Jesse Hunter, Albert H. Judson, and George W. Morgan purchased the parcel, which became Highland Park (Taylor 2004). The developers sub-divided this large parcel of land into smaller tracts for individual sale. The vast majority of real state development occurred adjacent to Pasadena Street, presently known as Figueroa Street, which was the major arterial serving as a connector from downtown Los Angeles to the City of Pasadena. Consequently, the community of Highland Park is often referred as being one of the original suburbs. The real estate development fabric of Highland Park developed from a collection of various architectural styles dominating the early 1900s; the
majority being California and Craftsmen Bungalows, however, the area exhibits many revival period styles such as Queen Anne and Spanish Colonial.

At the turn of the Century, the residents of the Highland Park Community were affluent and extremely involved with community issues. Therefore, the community residents formed a neighborhood improvement association to address the needs of the community, but despite all their efforts there were two issues the group could not solve, which was the shortage of water supply and the lack of police protection. Thus, in the 1890s they sought annexation to the City of Los Angeles in order to address such issues (Taylor 2004).

By the mid-late 20th Century, Highland Park transformed from an affluent Anglo community into an area that housed gangs and large numbers of Latino immigrants. The population growth during this period was large. Consequently, to accommodate such growth, many early century styled single-family dwellings were destroyed to create rectangular-shaped stucco apartment complexes. Such development standards were possible by the passing of the 1979 Northeast Los Angeles Plan, which allow for apartment complexes developments. By 1994, the community was able to bring such development standards to a halt by establishing a historic preservation overlay zone, which protects a significant number of dwellings in the community.

Presently, a large Latino population resides in Highland Park, with many of the residents being first and second generation immigrants. It is important to note that the criminal activity has decreased; nonetheless, the impacts that such activities had on the community are still affecting how the region perceives it (Chavez 2004). It is critical to note that the demographic profile of the community has changed over the years, but the community involvement and
participation has not diminished; consequently, the community houses strong community organizations that seek to better the community, both its residents and businesses.

2.2 Physical Environment

The station is located between two city blocks, Avenue 57 and Avenue 59. As previously stated, the study area is defined as being all the land within a ½-mile radius of the station. The station area exhibits many unique characteristics, such as its diverse land use structure. Figueroa Street influences the land uses of the study area, being the main arterial and commercial/retail street that runs across Highland Park. The station itself is located one city block north of Figueroa Street on Marmion Way. The land uses are formed in outward layers with its center being Figueroa Street. The order of those layers is as follows Commercial/Retail along Figueroa Street, Mixed Residential, Low Rise Apartments, Single Family Detached, and Public Facilities at various locations within the study area (see Figure 1).

The focus of those land uses is to concentrate development and major activities within the business district along Figueroa Street. The commercial/retail land use parcels serve as the business district of Highland Park, which runs from Avenue 50 to Avenue 61. The mixed residential land use parcels are composed of multi-family dwellings and single-family detached dwellings. The multi-family developments for the most part do not exceed three stories in height. The low-rise land use parcels house numerous multi-family dwellings, which allows for greater population densities. The single-family detached land use parcels are composed of dwellings serving working families; however, single-family detached dwellings are also found in other non-single-family detached land use zones. The public land use parcels are being used as city parking lots, schools, and community centers. The city parking lots are found within one block of Figueroa Street, serving as parking lots for the business district.
Figure 1. Highland Park ½-Mile Radius Land Use Map
2.3 Urban Design Analysis

The station area consist of two arterials, the first and most important in the sense of commercial/retail usage is Figueroa Street (*primary arterial*) running in a north/southwest direction, and the second is Monte Vista Street (*secondary arterial*), located two blocks north of Figueroa Street, running in a similar direction. Figueroa Street connects Downtown Los Angeles with the City of Pasadena; thus, exhibiting a greater number of vehicular travel than Monte Vista Street. There are several collector streets that intersect the two arterials; however, the streets that exhibit the majority of vehicular travel are Avenues 50, 52, 57, and 60. The study identifies the primary reason for the significant number of vehicular travel on these collector streets as being for their access to State Highway 110 (*Pasadena Freeway*). All of the streets that intersect Figueroa Street run in a north/southeast direction.

High pedestrian movements are evident along Figueroa Street within the Highland Park Business District. Other areas that exhibit pedestrian traffic at a lesser magnitude are Monte Vista Street, and Avenues 50, 52, 57, and 59. It is important to note that the streets within a city block of the rail station exhibit both large numbers of pedestrian and vehicular traffic; these findings are a result of field observations.

2.4 Demographics and Social Issues

The study conducted a socio-economic analysis to determine the characteristics of the residents of the study area. The findings presented were obtained from the 2000 US Census data sets by using the census tracts within the study area.

Census Tracts 1835.20, 1836.10, 1836.20, 1837, and 1838.10 fall within the study area. The study yields the following results. Total population for the study area is 22,187 with a high concentration of Latino (*non-Anglo*) residents at 79.6 percent, followed by Asian residents with
8.2 percent, and Anglo (non-Latino) residents with 7.7 percent (see Figure 2). Field observations confirmed the data findings. Furthermore, the census data indicates that 23.8 percent of the households in the study area are under poverty level. In 2000, the median household income was $30,598, which is 16.4 percent lower than the median household income for the City of Los Angeles. The age distribution for the study area was assembled into three groups, under 18 years of age (minors), 18 to 54 years of age (working age), and 55 years of age and older (senior citizens).

The data indicates that there is a high percentage of working age residents and a seemingly large number of minors. The combination of these percentages equals 88.2 percent (see Figure 3). From the data, it can be concluded that the residents of Highland Park are part of a large minority group, Latino population, with a strong working and young age group, whose median household income is some instances well below the poverty level.

In addition to the socio-economic profile, the census data identifies the transportation mode used by the residents of the study area for the journey to work. The findings indicate a
broad distribution of various transportation methods used by the residents. Only 54.8 percent of the residents (16 years and older) drive alone to work, indicating that 45.2 percent of the residents use other modes of transportation such as carpooling, public transit, and others (see Figure 4). The findings indicate that 18.0 percent of the residents use public transportation, thus reiterating the importance of public transportation in the community and the likelihood that this community will use public transit as a mode of transportation.

Economic development is essential in order to maintain a healthy community. Highland Park is home to a major corridor, Figueroa Street. Along with being a major thoroughfare, it is also a major shopping street, boasting many neighborhood commercial strips along its route. The section that runs through Highland Park is no different. The strip boasts over 200 businesses ranging from general commercial stores, grocery stores, and service stations, to medical care facilities, such as dentist offices.

Though the strip is old, the businesses along the strip are proportionally distributed by time of establishment. According to the Highland Park Business Association, 36 percent of the businesses based in Highland Park are only 5 to 10 years old, while another 37 percent have been there for more than ten years. The majority of those long lasting businesses are ones that are
able to cross cultural lines, such as ice cream and flower shops. Newer businesses, however are ones more culturally geared towards the community. Those businesses include restaurants, music, and general stores that sell ethnic goods and services that are not being offered by other businesses within the community. As previously stated, the majority of the businesses have been operating for more than five years. Nonetheless, there are a significant number of businesses that established operation in the community within the previous five years, totaling 52 businesses. This large number of businesses having only recently been opened is a positive reflection on the state of the community. Although it may be a low-income area, the residents still have expendable income to support businesses. In addition, new businesses can provide local jobs. Such businesses include but are not limited to establishments that cater predominately to the ethnic markets within the community by offering low-priced goods and services.

2.5 Development Plans and Potential

According to the City of Los Angeles public record, Councilmember Reyes introduced a motion to “approve the concept of developing a TOD including residential, mixed-use retail, and public parking on City Parking Lots No. 635, 695, 636, and 637 located in the immediate vicinity of the Avenue 57 Gold Line Station in Highland Park” (City of Los Angeles 2004: 03-2744). The motioned seeks for request for qualifications (RFQ) from developers, approval of three firms that would undertake the development, and a request for proposal (RFP). The office of the councilmember indicated that they are seeking a public-private partnership for the development of a TOD site within the study area that would provide mixed-use development, public parking, and affordable housing.
2.6 Station Area Planning Policies

Highland Park is served by four different planning policies all under the guidance by the City of Los Angeles. The community is under the City of Los Angeles General Plan, which oversees the long-term comprehensive approach to planning, development, and the future of the community. The Land Use Element of the General Plan is separated into sub-regional plans to better accommodate the character of the communities; thus, Highland Park is under the Northeast Los Angeles Community Plan. All land use issues such as uses and zoning are covered by this plan. The community of Highland Park fought to preserve the integrity and character of the community and in 1994, the Highland Park Historical Preservation Overlay Zone was passed. The overlay zone seeks to preserve community character and limit development standards to fit within the built environment of the community.

With the addition of the Gold Line to the corridor and specifically the Highland Park Station, in 2002 the city passed the Avenue 57 Transit-Oriented District Specific Plan. The plan seeks to develop seven districts with an emphasis on the Major Activity Center located just south of the station on Figueroa Street, mixed-use zones, Art Walk zones, and a secondary activity center, which all are located in the study area (see Figure 5). The specific plan seeks to facilitate development. As previously stated, the council office is pursuing developments in the Major Activity Center, seeking to start a development trend in Highland Park. It is important to note that even though the specific plan offers incentives for the developers it also sets strict requirements and regulations; furthermore, developments must comply with the Highland Park Historical Preservation Overlay Zone.
2.7 Community Stakeholders

From its beginnings, the residents of Highland Park have been very active members of the community and they continue to exhibit such characteristics. There are five major community organizations composed of community residents, property owners, and business owners. Nonetheless, there are community residents that exhibit extraordinary interest in the community, such as Martha Cardenas a 16-year resident of the Highland Park community who lives within walking distance of the Gold Line. Ms. Cardenas is actively involved with various groups in the community. Her involvement derives from an interest to empower community residents and seek community pride among community residents. Other organizations within the
community might have different agendas; thus, their input and effort is necessary to better understand the community and its needs.

The Highland Park Heritage Trust is a non-profit community based organization with its sole purpose of “preserving the heritage of the Arroyo Seco Communities through education, advocacy and preservation projects for the benefit of present and future generations” (www.hpht.org). The organization played a vital role in the creation of the Highland Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPHPOZ).

To implement the HPHPOZ, the Highland Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Board (HPHPOZB or HPOZ Board) was created to ensure that all new developments and rehabilitation of structures met the HPHPOZ standards (Fisher 2004). A crucial task and power of the HPOZ Board is to make recommendations to the city planning agencies and commissions regarding the compliance of new developments and rehabilitated structures with the HPHPOZ (Fisher 2004). Charlie Fisher, Executive Director of the HPOZ Board, stated, “with regards to our recommendations and their considerations by the city planning agencies, 99 percent of the time our recommendations are upheld” (Fisher 2004). The main concepts that the HPOZ Board deals with are design and scale; thus is it crucial that projects requiring new construction must first seek approval from the HPOZ Board.

The City of Los Angeles provides for community based organizations to be formed under their Neighborhood Council Citywide System; accordingly, the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council serves to “recognize local issues and act upon them in the best interests of the people of Highland Park” (www.nelanet.org/hhpnc). The neighborhood council is composed of community residents, property owners, and community business owners seeking for the betterment of Highland Park.
To serve businesses, the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce was established in 1936. The Chamber of Commerce serves as an agent for the economic development of the community. The objectives of the Chamber of Commerce include but are not limited to “promote unity among all of the Highland Park stakeholders, promote business, commercial, industrial and moral development of the community, and increase the real estate and other tangible value of the Highland Park Community” (http://www.nelanet.org/highland.park.chamber). To better serve the businesses located on Figueroa Street, business owners created the North Figueroa Association, a business improvement district (BID). According to Arturo Chavez, chief field deputy of Council District 1, the main objectives of the BID are to provide two staff members that clean the sidewalks, storefronts, and general clean up of the Figueroa Street Business District. Chavez also stated that all of the community organizations of Highland Park are active, well organized, and seek nothing but the betterment of Highland Park such as decorating the streets with Christmas lights during Christmas time, providing tours of the community, and setting up community parades for the enjoyment of all community members.

On the other side of the spectrum, government organizations are very involved with the community. Councilmember Ed P. Reyes urgently seeks an economic development revival for the study area and the community of Highland Park as a whole. According to Chavez, the councilmember holds various meetings with community members, business owners, property owners, community organizations, and any interested parties throughout various modes. The council district is large, so it can be difficult to have a direct connection with the councilmember; however, it is worth nothing that up to a certain extent the staff of the councilmember does assist the various stakeholders listed above using all means possible.
CHAPTER 3. STATION ANALYSIS

The focus of the study is to determine the potential for Transit-Oriented Development; hence, it is critical to conduct an analysis of the transit station. Chapter 3 conducts a full analysis of the Highland Park Station, from its design, function, access, impacts, to data collected from Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) ridership reports.

3.1 Urban Design and Functionality Analysis

The Highland Park Station is located at 151 Marmion Way, in-between Avenue 57 and Avenue 59 (see Figure 6). The station is parallel to Figueroa Street, just a block to the north. The station platform is relatively small, placed in-between the two rail lines standing on a raised concrete slab. The station contains several metal furnishings and its partiality covered by a light blue aluminum rooftop to protect patrons waiting for the trains from the elements. Streetlights are found at the station and throughout the station area, providing lighting and making passengers feel at ease. To reach the station patrons must walk through either Avenue 57 or Avenue 59 on guardrail-protected ramps that ensure conformity and accessibility for all patrons.
The station is highly visible from adjacent streets; however, just a block away from the station an individual driving down on Figueroa Street might not see the station due to the low scale of the station and the height of the buildings on Figueroa Street. Nonetheless, the community exhibits a high degree of pedestrian activity; thus, it would be relatively safe to conclude that the community is aware of the location of the station.

In front of the station, at the intersection of Avenue 58 and Marmion Way, there is a small plaza with a public art ornament. The public art is a faux stone tree created by artist Jud Fine. The open plaza covered with wooden trellis exhibits characteristics that pay homage to the Craftsman style dwellings of the area (see Figure 7). The raised-stone walls and metal benches supply the plaza with sitting and resting amenities; nonetheless, there is a lack of shade, which can be an inconvenience for patrons. The sidewalks adjacent to the plaza are wide and pedestrian friendly with streetlights and seating amenities throughout the sidewalks; however, they also lack considerable trees that can provide shading amenities. From field observations, it can be noted that many Gold Line riders are dropped off at the plaza; hence, the plaza serves as a landmark for riders to identify the station easily.
3.2 Station Ridership and Function Analysis

The Gold Line has not reached its predicted ridership; at best, it has reached 50 percent of the predicted weekday ridership. That taken into consideration, the Highland Park Station ranks well when compared to the rest of the 13 stations in the Gold Line corridor. According to MTA preliminary studies on the Gold Line boarding and alighting ridership data at the various stations, Highland Park ranks from 3rd highest for weekday northbound boardings (5.0 percent) to a worst of 6th highest for Saturday northbound alightings (6.7 percent) and Saturday southbound boardings (6.1 percent). Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the Highland Park station is being utilized to a higher degree than the majority of the other stations. The station is an essential generator of Gold Line ridership.

3.3 Access

There are several methods to access the station, such as walking, bicycling, public transit (bus) and automobile.

According to field observations, walking is the most frequent mode of accessibility used to reach the station, mainly along the Avenue 57 corridor from the station southward towards Figueroa Street. A walking assessment was conducted within the vicinity in order to determine the accessibility of the station for pedestrian users. Four individuals walked outward into opposite directions from the stone tree plaza. The findings of the walking assessment were measured at five-minute intervals for ten minutes. The walking assessment indicates that a ¼-mile can be reached within five minutes of walking at a normal pace. A ten-minute walk closely resembles the ½-mile radius of the study area. The findings indicate that a resident within the study area can reach the station walking for approximately ten-minutes or less.
The second part of the access study addresses accessibility to the station for bicyclists. The station area exhibits little to no bicycle usage. Field observations concluded that bicycle lanes are not available in most of local streets within the station area, nor are bicycle racks located at the station. Therefore, the study finds that bicycle use to access the station is not viable in terms of usage and resource availability.

MTA provides bus services on adjacent streets and those buses run along the Downtown Los Angeles – City of Pasadena Corridor with destinations in the City of Pasadena, North Highland Park, and Eagle Rock. Bus route 256 runs along Avenue 57, bus routes 83 and 256 run along Monte Vista Street, and bus routes 81, 176, and 381 run along Figueroa Street. The LA DASH shuttle that makes a stop at the Highland Park station runs from Eagle Rock to San Pascual. Thus, usage of public transit to access the station is a viable option.

The location of the station allows good vehicular access. The station can be reached from Avenue 57, 58, and 59. Within the study area, there are several arterial roads such as Monte Vista Street, Avenue 57, and Figueroa Street all of which connect to the region at greater scales. Parking is not provided by MTA; however, there are four City owned parking lots adjacent to the station (parking lots numbers 635-637 and 695). According to the staff of Council District 1, the parking facilities are for use of the Figueroa Street commercial/retail business patrons; however, field observations concluded that the parking lots are being underutilized by those patrons or light rail riders. The parking rates at all four parking lots are the same, 25 cents per hour or a maximum of two dollars per day. Those prices are relatively inexpensive for parking located adjacent to a major arterial street with commercial/retail amenities (Figueroa Street) and a light rail transit station (Highland Park Station). Field observations did notice a considerable number
of drop offs at the corner of Avenue 58 and Marmion Way. Hence, the study concludes that automobile accessibility is the most convenient access mode for the Highland Park Station.

3.4 Station Impacts

The researchers conducted interviews with random households that reside directly adjacent to the light rail tracks, and the top concerns expressed were noise and safety. A considerable number of residents stated that they were bothered by the noise the trains made while passing through the neighborhood, such as bells and horns. Field observations determined that the trains do make certain degree of uncomfortable noise; however, MTA safety mitigation strategies indicate that it is in the best interest of the community to have audible warnings in order to keep pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist aware that the train is present. The safety concern deals with the proximity of the tracks to the single-family dwellings. The rail tracks are less than 20 feet from the main entrances to the majority of the single-family dwellings along the corridor of the study area. The residents considered the tracks to be a potential danger for children. Trains pass at much lower speeds through the study area in order to mitigate such concerns (20 mph). It is important to note that there is no data indicating that an accident has occurred at the study area for such claims. Nonetheless, it is extremely important to keep monitoring the safety of the rail tracks to prevent an incident from ever occurring.
CHAPTER 4. IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A critical part of the study was to identify the most important issues for the station area and bring those issues to the attention of stakeholders. The following analyzes the top three issues the study identified. The issues involve the cost of housing, pedestrian safety along Figueroa Street, and a possible explanation on why the Gold Line ridership levels are lower than forecasted.

Highland Park is a unique community with great potential for economic and community development. This chapter outlines what the study determined to be the most critical opportunities for the station area. The opportunities include a method to increase Gold Line ridership and an economic development plan for the station area, which includes design integration for Avenues 57, 58, and 59 and TOD with an emphasis in affordable housing and community development.

4.1 Issue: Housing - Gentrification

Housing values have increased throughout Southern California. While it benefits long time homeowners, this phenomenon can have devastating effects on working class minority residents occupying communities such as Highland Park. According to home sales recorded on Multiple Listing Services, the median house value for a single-family dwelling in 1999 for the study area was $134,000. The following chart shows the increase in median housing values from 1999 to 2004.

Figure 8. Highland Park Median Housing Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$242,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$279,950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median Housing Values
$134,000; this number more than doubled to reach $279,950 in 2004 (see Figure 8). Affordability for area residents is decreasing on a yearly basis. Median household income within the last five years has not doubled; therefore, affordability is becoming a dream rather than a reality. How will the region deal with such a phenomenon? There are a number of ways to deal with such situation, such as to build affordable housing, create a Community Land Trust, and others; however, in order to alleviate the magnitude of this phenomenon, all community stakeholders must work together to ensure successful results in slowing down the gentrification process that is occurring throughout Southern California.

4.2 Issue: Highland Park Community - Pedestrian Safety

Figueroa Street is a highly used pedestrian and vehicular corridor; however, field observations determined that the layout of the intersections and the crosswalks is an issue for pedestrian safety. Most of the intersections in the study area are formed by what is called “T-Intersections,” such type of intersection occurs when a street intersects a major arterial (Figueroa Street) on two alignments; however, the street is still the same one. The layout of the street network makes the same street to end in a T and make an origin on a T; therefore, making vehicular travel patterns (especially turn movements) confusing for visitors. At best, those types of intersections are not as dangerous as the three crosswalks located on Avenue 55 southbound, Avenue 55 northbound, and Avenue 60 northbound. The crosswalks located at the T-intersections previously listed are approximately the equivalent of seven lanes of traffic composed of four through lanes, a turn lane, and two lanes designated for parking (one on each side of the street) (see Figure 9). Figure 9 shows the crosswalks at Avenue 55, the crosswalks are marked on the pavement as being crosswalks, and there are reflective yellow signs that announce the crosswalks.
From field observations, the report finds the crosswalks to be perceived as dangerous because the majority of individuals crossing through the crosswalks were either running or walking at an accelerated pace. A greater issue arises when mothers with children use those crosswalks or children walking alone, who cannot walk at a fast pace (see Figure 9). The study did not gather specific data on accidents attributed to such crosswalks; however, from field observations it determined that such crosswalks are unsafe and potentially dangerous. Hence, the study offers mitigation suggestions, such as to either to close down the crosswalks or implement better crossing systems like the one found on Figueroa Street just west of Avenue 52. The crosswalk on Avenue 52 has all the amenities as the ones previously mentioned on Avenue 55 and Avenue 60; however, this crosswalk exhibits additional safety measures such as a signal light warning drivers of the crosswalk. An additional safety measure that can be implemented on the problematic crosswalks is the placement of special pedestrian crosswalk lights that would allow all pedestrian traffic to cross without having to be concerned with vehicular traffic. By implementing a mitigation measure, the probability of pedestrian fatalities can be reduced.

4.3 Issue: Gold Line - Low Ridership

As previously stated, the ridership for the Gold Line has not reached its projected figures. Many variables influence such an outcome. One of the reasons that ridership is low is the level of competition from bus transit modes that serve the same corridor. The bus routes serve the
same corridor in which the Gold Line seeks to compete, and unlike the Gold Line, the bus routes allow for greater flexibility, such as greater number of available transfers and destinations, greater number of stops, and broader destinations served by the service. Downtown Los Angeles is the origin of the three bus routes and their destinations are the City of Pasadena (Route 381), North Highland Park (Route 83), and Eagle Rock (Route 81) (see Figure 10). All three bus routes pass through the study area. Hence, the study identifies this as an issue for the entire corridor but with a greater emphasis on the study area due to the proximity of all modes of travel within the study area. The study does not recommend eliminating a bus route; however, it is
4.4 Opportunity: Gold Line - Increase Ridership

There are several methods to increase the ridership of the Gold Line; the study finds the best method to increase ridership in the Highland Park Station is to create an enhance shuttle services for the immediate community of Highland Park. As it was previously stated, according to preliminary MTA ridership data, the Highland Park station is doing proportionally better than the majority of the stations on the system. However, from field observations the study concludes that by implementing a shuttle/dash service that would pick up residents at designated stops within a specific geographic location of Highland Park and have its main drop off area at the station may generate significant additional Gold Line riders. The shuttle/dash service would have to run along these heavily pedestrian utilized streets: Figueroa Street, Avenue 50, Monte Vista Street, and York Boulevard. Further analysis is required to determine the specific route.

4.5 Opportunity: Design Integration - Pedestrian Corridors

The first step in the economic development process of the station area would be to seek pedestrian corridors linkages on Avenues 57, 58, and 59 towards Figueroa Street. The existing conditions of these streets are not inviting and for the most part Gold Line riders are unaware of the commercial/retail stores located on Figueroa Street. From the station, all that riders see are...
empty asphalt surface parking lots, trash bins, back of buildings, and empty streets (see Figure 11).

The pedestrian corridor would seek to create pedestrian friendly streets with automobile access. The focus must be development standards that would be followed by new developments. According to the staff of Council District 1, there was a $3 million dollar investment (CDBG funds) within the study area prior to the opening of the Gold Line. The funding was used to create cleaner streets, provide streetlights, plant trees, and create friendly pedestrian sidewalks. Such action was the start towards creating a pedestrian friendly environment within this sub-area; however, the next step in the process includes mandating strict development standards that would seek the creation of pedestrian corridors in the study area.

As previously stated, Council District 1 is seeking to develop four parcels of land within the sub-area; hence, such development must set the standard for future redevelopments. Field observations reveal that there is high pedestrian mobility along Avenue 57, 58, 59, and Figueroa Street. Consequently, to increase the number of pedestrian mobility and activity, new development must implement development standards that seek to cater the pedestrian community of Highland Park. Furthermore, creating the pedestrian corridors would make the area attractive, pleasant, and inviting for light rail riders; thus, providing an incentive for those riders to get off at the Highland Park station and discover the Figueroa commercial/retail corridor, which is hard to see with existing conditions.

4.6 Opportunity: Housing - Infill Development

In Southern California, population growth and lack of available housing has increased prices; however, the study area has a unique opportunity to seek development that can focus on affordable family-oriented multi-family residential housing. Councilmember Reyes is seeking a
joint public-private TOD venture. The development would utilize the proper densities to stay consistent with the community and create a mixed-use development product with an emphasis on affordable multi-family residential housing. Therefore, the study identifies development standards to be the most important element in the development process of any TOD within the study area.

The study finds that all potential TODs in the study area must allow flexibility for mixed-use developments that can consist of an integration of commercial/retail and residential uses (see Figure 12). Following such development standards would aid in the formation of the previously mentioned pedestrian corridors. Councilmember Reyes has stated that he will seek to development four city parking lots into TODs; the study finds that such action is the best move to start redevelopment efforts in Highland Park. The second area that should be considered for TOD is the redevelopment of some parcels on the Figueroa Street corridor. Nonetheless, it is extremely important to start the process and the motion by councilmember Reyes has just accomplished such task.
4.7 Opportunity: Community Development - Highland Park as a Destination

The City of Los Angeles recently adopted the Avenue 57 Transit-Oriented District. This specific plan has the goal of creating a new Highland Park, situated around the Gold Line transit stop at Avenue 57. The plan calls for creating an arts center and commercial mixed-use districts along the Figueroa corridor with mixed-use housing and business that will attract the local inhabitants as well as individuals from surrounding communities (see Figure 5). Business should include but are not limited to small department stores, home improvement centers, computer and software stores, as well as art supply stores, and galleries. The overall goal of the specific plan is to revitalize the district, making it into an exciting new place within the Northeast section of Los Angeles. The plan does not address the future of current businesses, nor does it state whether the businesses that are being targeted for this new development are ethnic owned and operated, or if the businesses will attract an ethnic clientele. Successful businesses in Highland Park have been ones that are able to change their marketing schemes and attract the dollar of current residents, dollars that are seeking ethnic goods and services.

The plan is well written, but it should modify its focus from trying to attract general businesses to offering a new form of advancement for locally own ethnic businesses offering goods and services that are not offered by mainstream businesses. This direction will allow the community to reinvest in itself. Those who work or own businesses within the community probably will also live in the community. This ownership pattern is one of the best ways of increasing business interaction and job growth. To increase diversification, the specific plan needs to address more than just commercial and art uses within the district. In order to transform Highland Park, the diversity of businesses must be increased. In order to maintain the businesses and increase growth potential, the community must have services that are more then just
commercial/retail. Other services offered might include cultural centers, including museums in historically significant locations. These centers will help not only in attracting members from other communities, but it will also increase the business opportunities within the community. By attracting a new client base, other businesses that would not have survived in the current economic setting of Highland Park might have a possibility to flourish.

Several parcels within the study area are going to have to be redeveloped in order to accommodate growth. Nonetheless, some significant structures will be best if they were rehabilitated, such as the Highland Park Theater. This structure could be used as the center of a new redevelopment area. The theater could house a cultural center as well as new restaurants and other shops that would not only serve the surrounding community but the region.

Other areas of importance are the pedestrian corridors of Avenues 57, 58, and 59. The corridors could house restaurants, flower shops, small convenience stores, and other businesses that do not need the exposure from being on the main corridor. These businesses will be the ones that will attract riders from the station to the other new and existing businesses along the Figueroa Street corridor, making Highland Park a regional destination.
CHAPTER 5. PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

The study has defined stakeholders as all the individuals residing in Highland Park and individuals that have an interest in the community. In any facet of the planning and development process, it is crucial to include all community stakeholders because those individuals and their families will be ultimately affected by any decisions that governmental and private entities undertake. Thus, the team conducted its best efforts to interview community residents, representatives, organizations, and interested individuals of Highland Park.

5.1 Suggestion from March Presentations

In late March of 2004, the team presented its preliminary findings to City of Los Angeles department heads. The primary feedback received from the March presentation was to further the study of TOD and present alternatives on actual sites within the Highland Park study area. Thus, the team conducted land suitability analysis to identify potential TOD sites and developed three alternatives that could guide TOD in Highland Park (both analyses are further discussed in latter chapters). The department heads did point out that the team was on track regarding its research analysis methodology.

5.2 Highland Park Stakeholders Perspectives

The study finds it crucial to identify the perspectives from all the stakeholders; hence, the team conducted workshops, surveys, and interviews with community residents, business owners, visitors, governmental official, and planning consultants.

The team conducted two workshops at the Franklin Community Adult High School, which hold English as Second Language classes (ESL). The workshops were conducted in two different classrooms of 15 and 20 students, with one class being beginner ESL students and the second being advanced ESL students, respectably. The purpose of the workshops was to inform
individuals of the planning and development process as well as discuss issues that are affecting Highland Park. The workshops discussions identified that for the most part individuals attending the workshops have little to no involvement in community affairs. Therefore, it was critical for the team to inform community residents/workshop attendees about the planning and development process, as well as who they should contact if they ever needed aid in specific areas. The workshops were a great success; such success must be attributed to the students’ participation and engagement in class discussion as well as the class instructors and the school principal, Ms Diane Kelley Baird.

The team conducted surveys within the station area as well. There were over 100 respondents to the walk up surveys the team conducted in April and May of 2004. The survey methodology used for the survey implementation was stratified random sampling in which the team surveyed a resident from each side of the street in any given block, throughout all the blocks in the station area. The survey asked several questions; however, the most critical ones where whether they were residents of Highland Park and whether they shop and or used the Figueroa Retail Corridor for entertainment purposes. The survey results indicated that 80 percent of the respondents shop in the Figueroa Retail Corridor as well as 63 percent visited the area weekly for entertainment. Thus, the study finds that the station area is being highly utilized by the local
residents. Such findings identify the market that can increase usage of the retail and entertainment corridor on Figueroa Street. The survey responses of the Highland Park residents were only taken into account because the responses for visitors to the area were not statistically significant to analyze and report. Nonetheless, it is crucial to identify who are the existing users of the Figueroa Street retail corridor, which are primary local residents who shop more than twice a week and visit the area for entertainment purposes at least once a week.

Nonetheless, the survey key findings identity issues that Highland Park community residents consider to be a dilemma.

Highland Park Station Area Key Findings:

- **Safety and Maintenance**
  - The overwhelming majority would like to see an increase in peace officer patrol as well as an increase number of maintenance mechanism to ensure the aesthetic pleasantness of the community.

- **Better Retail Opportunities**
  - An astonishing 80 percent of survey respondents identify that they shop at Highland Park; therefore, the same respondents identify that there is a need to amplify the types of retail opportunities offered at Highland Park.

- **Community Concern About Preserving Community Historic Physical Character**
  - Even though, survey respondents for the most part identify their preference towards new development they were concerned on design standards needed to preserve the historic character of the community.

- **The Community is Not Well Informed About Community Affairs, but Would Like to be Involved in the Future**
The vast majority of the respondents (95 percent) identified that they had not attended a community meeting within the last six months; however, they indicated that in the future they would be interested in participating in community meetings and being more involved in the community.

Those are the key findings identified by the survey results. Further studies are needed to identify specifically what city services are needed, what retail opportunities the residents would like to see, how much of a community physical characteristic needs to be preserved, and what are the best mechanisms to increase resident participation in community affairs.

The team interviewed community representative Martha Cardenas, who has resided in Highland Park for over 16 years and lives within three blocks of the Highland Park Station. After speaking to Cardenas on several issues the team identified her most crucial argument to be the lack of city services and the overcrowding problem in homes and schools. Cardenas is opposed to development of housing or trendy retail shops because she believes it is more important to provide city services, such as street lights, side-walk trash collection, and others, as well as to provide retail opportunities that provide the goods and services that local residents seek.

Another point that Cardenas identifies is the lack of community involvement and participation by Highland Park residents. She would like to see a change in the way Highland Park operates. She believes that it is crucial to have participation by all community members not just a few. Thus, her agenda is to seek for new development that will enhance city service facilities and programs as well as to limit the amount of growth in population due to the scarce natural and infrastructure resources of Highland Park.
The team held interviews with three of the five community organizations of Highland Park. The key findings are as follow:

- **North Figueroa Association (NFA) (BID)**
  
  - The team interviewed Misty Iwatsu, Executive Director, of the NFA a business improvement district. According to the NFA, Highland Park is suitable for major redevelopment. Misty Iwatsu stated, “In five years Highland Park could be the next Old Town Pasadena, with the trendy shops, quality mom and pop restaurants, and unique retail opportunities” (Iwatsu 2004). Thus, the vision of Highland Park according to the NFA is one of trendier and hip shops, seeking to capitalize in their economic development efforts.

- **Highland Park Heritage Trust (HPHT)**
  
  - The team interviewed Nicole Possert the president of the HPHT. Throughout the interview Possert identified the following positions of the HPHT: the HPHT’s primary concern is preserving the physical historic architecture of structures in Highland Park. HPHT role in the community is to inform and advocate for physical historic preservation of structures. The HPHT is not entirely against new development; however, they believe that, “new projects must take into consideration the HPHPOZ and must be sensitive to site historical ties” (Possert 2004). They would like to see Highland Park become an Old Town Pasadena because if the historic structures are maintained and rehabilitated, they can serve as a catalyst for new development. Therefore, the historic structures in Highland Park are significant and possess an immense power.

- **Highland Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Board (HPOZ Board)**
The executive director for the HPOZ Board is Charlie Fisher. When interviewed, Fisher identified the HPOZ Board’s primary task as, “to make recommendations to the City of Los Angeles planning department regarding new or rehabilitated development projects” (Fisher 2004). The most significant character of the HPOZ Board is the emphasis on design and scale. According to Fisher, the ideal project for the station area is a, “three story building that will not exceed 45 feet in height. However, the architectural design will have to be suitable and must resemble the community” (Fisher 2004). Thus, it is crucial to note that the HPOZ Board is not opposed to new development; they are just concerned with the design and scale of the actual project. The HPOZ Board is seeking to preserve the physical structures under the Highland Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. The HPOZ Board would like to see Highland Park turn into Old Town Pasadena. Thus, maintain the development of the area to low-scale development projects.

The team held an interview with City of Los Angeles District 1 Councilmember, Ed P. Reyes. The team interviewed Reyes and discovered a preference towards TOD. The councilmember views Highland Park as a rich arts and crafts community. According to the councilmember, the ideal development for the station area would be a, “five-six story structure that would be composed of retail space on the bottom floors and residential units in the upper floors, while preserving the existing parking stalls in the area and seeking to provide affordable housing within the area” (Reyes 2004). It is critical to note that the councilmember has motioned to allow the City of Los Angeles to prepare a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in order to select one firm that would be in charge of developing a parcel within the study area (the parcel is the TOD site A), which this study discusses in later chapters. Hence, the
councilmember is an individual seeking to increase the economic development opportunities for the area as well as provide affordable housing units and increasing the retail opportunities for the area.

Prior to finalizing this report and presenting our final findings to the councilmember, community organizations, and the public, the team presented preliminary studies to two well know individuals with strong ties to planning and development. The team presented its findings to Dr. Robert Cervero, a consultant and a professor of City and Regional Planning at University of California Berkley City, and John Fregonese, a principal at Fregonese Calthorpe Associates. From the preliminary findings the team presented Dr. Cervero and Fregonese, they recommended to further explore the concept of theme development specifically for Highland Park due to its rich historic arts and crafts community and the rich culture that is currently located in the station area (Latino Culture). The two consultants agree that if Highland Park is seeking to become a regional draw they must incorporate the Latino culture into any development scenarios. Hence, Highland Park could stand out from the rest of the region and it could become a regional powerhouse in terms of bringing economic development into the area by creating an ethnic enclave (Cervero and Fregonese). Cervero and Fregonese expressed concerns about developing Highland Park into a Pasadena imitation; they would rather see the rich history and culture of the area as the driving force and catalyst for development.

As previously noted, Highland Park Stakeholders disagree on key development standards issues, such as the feasibility of Highland Park for new development, design, scale, and theme of development. From the workshops, surveys, and interviews with the various stakeholders, the study finds that it is crucial for all stakeholders to work collectively, thus ensuring cohesiveness and feasibility of development in Highland Park.
CHAPTER 6. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE STATION AREA

The goals and objectives for the station area are derived from various entities and individuals with a stake in the community. The stakeholders’ views and stands on certain issues will guide the development of the goals and objectives. The study finds that it is essential for Highland Park community organizations and residents to work collectively seeking goals and objectives that will be feasible and accomplishable.

6.1 Values Underlying Goals and Objectives

The community of Highland Park does not hold similar values; hence, their goals and objectives differ among the various groups in the community. The community of Highland Park is divided into two major groups; the long-time residents (have resided in the community for over 10 years) and the short-time residents (have resided in the community for less than 10 years) (Reyes 2004). Unfortunately, the short-time residents do not take an active role in the community, such as lack of participation in public meetings and low levels of voting turn out (Reyes 2004). The lack of community involvement causes their views and values to be undermined by long-time residents, which are the residents that are most actively involved in the community (Iwatsu 2004). From the workshops and surveys conducted, the study concludes that 50 percent of short-time or new residents of Highland Park would like to see new development in the area (Figueroa Retail Corridor) as oppose to only 30 percent of long-time residents that would like to see new development in the area. Such survey findings prove the differences of views and values of the Highland Park community residents towards new development. The workshops were conducted with short-time residents of Highland Park as opposed to the surveys, which were conducted within the station area to both short-time and long-time residents. The study concludes that it is crucial for short-time resident to express their views and values in
public meetings as well as in the voting booths in order to increase their input on what takes place in the community.

The views on community development reaches further into residents who are part of the business community and the ones that are not. According to Iwatsu, NFA Executive Director, “business owners who are long-time residents were tired of seeing the dilapidation of the Highland Park retail district (Figueroa Street), such as to become a major component of the NFA’s formation” (Iwatsu 2004). However, a long-time resident of Highland Park (40 year resident) expressed her feelings towards the subject at the second presentation of the study findings to city agencies and community residents and organizations at Ramona Hall in Highland Park (Highland Park June 7, 2004); she explained how the historic physical character of Highland Park would be destroyed if new development was to take place in Highland Park. Her concern derived from the standpoint that community residents will not benefit from such development and it will only bring more people into a community that is highly dense, lacking the appropriate level of city services (trash collection and street sweeping), and it will impose a burden in the fragile infrastructure of Highland Park (sewers and water lines). Therefore, the struggle of the business community and the non-business residents also affects the outcomes of any projects set forth by the private and or public sector. It is crucial to seek agreement between the two groups in order to move the community forward as a vital community within the region.

The last but pivotal component that affects the goals and objectives of the community are the various community organizations found in Highland Park. There are over five organizations (only five organizations focus primarily in the station area, see stakeholders section for further details of community organizations) actively involve in striving to enhance the social and physical environments of Highland Park. Nonetheless, each organization holds unique values
that set forth their agendas. To achieve community development in Highland Park, all the community organizations will have to compromise their values and set forth agendas that will guide community development in Highland Park. As simple as the task might suggest, the task will involve a complex process in which the various community organizations will have to compromise and be held accountable to such compromise in order to have an agenda that will withstand opposition. The study finds that community organizations in Highland Park represent special interests; therefore, it is crucial that those organizations work across the various special interests with community residents to establish an agenda that will guide community development and preservation.

The three values underlying the goals and objectives requires stakeholders to work collectively to preserve the historic physical character of the community as well as to enhance it, to improve the social environment of the community, and to provide the means in which all Highland Park community residents could express their interest and values. By collectively advocating for the same values, the community would have a greater role in what the public or private sector seeks to accomplish in terms of new development.

6.2 Goals and Objectives

The study finds community development to be the primary goal of Highland Park in which economic development and neighborhood revitalization are essential components of the goal. As expressed by councilmember Ed P. Reyes, “the goal is to provide for community development to take place” (Reyes 2004), the NFA executive director, Misty Iwatsu, furthered the goal by stating that, “economic development is a major component of Highland Park’s future” (Iwatsu 2004); furthermore, the Highland Park Heritage Trust President, Nicole Possert, believes that, “neighborhood revitalization is essential to preserve the physical character of this
The various stakeholders and residents of Highland Park play a crucial role in the community development process. The stakeholders will set forth the agenda guiding the community development efforts of Highland Park. As previously stated, it is essential that community stakeholders work collectively to further the goal of the community; thus, enhancing the social and physical environments of the community.

To successfully accomplish the goal stated above, the study finds the following objectives to be necessary:

- Provide retail/commercial opportunities within the study area
- Provide features such as street furniture, trees, lighting, and others that will enhance the friendliness of sidewalks; hence, creating pedestrian corridors
- Provide housing opportunities within the study area
- Provide features that will welcome Gold Line riders when boarding or alighting, such features can be but are not limited to retail facilities, streetscape features, and pedestrian amenities (*street furniture and others*)
- Provide an environment in which pedestrian activities are sought, such as providing open space for public entertainers, open space for pedestrian interaction, and other features that will support a pedestrian environment
- Provide the means necessary to preserve historically significant structures within the station area, such as HPOZ Board restrictions on the rehabilitation of historically significant structures and incentives for property owners who are rehabilitating historically significant structures within the station area
- Provide the means necessary for historically significant structures to be vital and serve as a catalyst for economic and community development
- Provide the means necessary to foster entrepreneurial opportunities for Highland Park residents

To better meet the objectives identified above, the study finds that there must be a collaborative effort by all community organizations, government agencies (council district 1 office), and community residents. Furthermore, the study finds that a Transit-Oriented Development project incorporates the various elements set for by the objectives. A TOD project provides housing units, retail space, if required it can enhance pedestrian walkways by providing pedestrian amenities (street furniture, trees, lighting, and others), and in essence it can foster the environment needed to further the pedestrian corridor activities (open space for entertainers and community events). Another component of a TOD project is that its retail facilities could be used to provide entrepreneurial opportunities for Highland Park residents; hence, creating the means for resident upward mobility. A TOD project design is essential; hence, the project must confine to development standard of Highland Park, exhibiting features that will aid in preserving the historic physical character of the community. Therefore, it is crucial to note that the study finds that a TOD project will support the goal of community development for Highland Park and help make Highland Park a vital community within the region.
CHAPTER 7. HIGHLAND PARK LAND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS: POTENTIAL TOD SITES

The team conducted a land suitability analysis in which its primary goal was to locate sites that would be feasible for TOD project. The analysis was conducted throughout the Highland Park station area by conducting a windshield survey; however, the Figueroa Street retail corridor was further analyzed by using a walk up survey methodology. The criteria in the evaluation process for determining whether a site was suitable for TOD was existing structures. If the existing structures did not contribute to the goal and objectives identified previously, then the site passed the first suitability test and was noted for further study. A major component of the first TOD suitability test was the physical condition of the existing structures, because if the structures appeared to be in good physical condition, then the team believes that the redevelopment of the site would be financially and politically challenging. Therefore, those sites that exhibit structures in good physical condition were not identified as potential sites for TOD.

Furthermore, the second component of the land suitability analysis criteria established that the following characteristics must be present in order for the site to be identified as suitable for TOD:

- Parcels must be categorized in the Highland Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPHPOZ) as non-contributing features; because, parcels that are contributing features under the HPHPOZ can be financially and politically unfeasible to redevelop.

- The total square footage for a site must be equal or greater than 25,000 feet because if a TOD project is to have an impact in the goal and objectives of the community, then it must be large enough to accommodate for the successful accomplishment of the goal and
its objectives. A second aspect to these criteria is that for a project to be attractive to private market developers, the site must be large enough to be financially feasible.

- The site must be located within close proximity of the Highland Park Gold Line station and the Figueroa Street retail district. A site that does not meet this criteria will not further the goal and objectives established for the station area; hence, the location of the site must be within a five-minute walk or ¼ mile of the locations identified above.

After carefully conducting the land suitability analysis, the team identified three sites that meet the characteristics established in the analysis evaluation criteria. The sites are categorized as A, B, and C and are presented in order of potential, such as to label site A as the site most suitable for TOD and site C as exhibiting a lesser suitability for TOD within the analysis findings.

7.1 Potential TOD Site: A

The most promising site for TOD is site A, which is located between Avenue 57 and Avenue 58 south of Marmion Way (see Figure 14). The total square footage for the site is 45,000 feet and the larger part of the site is currently being used by the City of Los Angeles as an asphalt surface parking area that possess 100 parking stalls; the smaller parcel of this lot is a privately-owned asphalt surface parking area. The large parcel equals 38,750 square feet and the smaller parcel equals 6,250 square feet, which totals to 45,000 square feet. The site proximity to the rail station and the retail corridor, the current use, the fact that is a non-contributing feature in the
HPHPOZ, and the willingness of the City of Los Angeles to redevelop the site made this site the most favorable for TOD. After close observation and study, the team finds that the site is not being utilized to its intended capacity. In a typical weekday, the parking area is utilized at a maximum of 40 percent capacity and in a typical weekend the parking area is utilized at a maximum of 20 percent capacity (see Figure 15). Furthermore, it is important to note that the City of Los Angeles provides an additional 250 parking stalls within the immediate vicinity of site A, all of which are located within the station area.

7.2 Potential TOD Site: B

The second most promising site for TOD is site B, which is located in the northeast corner of Figueroa Street and Avenue 58 (see Figure 16). The site is approximately 30,000 square feet. It is currently being used as a retail/commercial shopping center and a low priced goods store. The site is located in a key intersection that holds much promise and its existing design characteristics does not contribute to the pedestrian feel that the other retail structures in the area display. The site is designed after a typical strip mall development in which the asphalt surface parking area is located in front of all the retail space, thus placing the retail space towards the back of the site, allowing for little to no interaction between pedestrian...
on Figueroa Street and the retail area (see Figure 17). The site was developed to facilitate automobile use, which the study determined is not a crucial use in the area since the vast majority of the users of the retail district walk and there is off-street parking stalls provided throughout Figueroa Street and asphalt surface parking areas as well. Therefore, the team finds that it would be a better use of the site if it was redeveloped into a TOD project that would enhance Highland Park’s historic physical characteristics and the pedestrian environment that is visually displayed in the community. Others factors contributing to the selection of the site are its close proximity to the rail station and retail district as well as the fact that the site is identified as a non-contributing feature in the HPHPOZ, thus allowing for development of the site without major challenges.

7.3 Potential TOD Site: C

The third most promising site for TOD is site C, which is located between Avenue 53 and Avenue 54 north of Figueroa Street (see Figure 18). The total square footage for the site is 35,600 feet. The site existing uses are office space, small size shops, and an asphalt surface parking area, all of which stand on Figueroa Street facing the retail corridor (see Figure 19). Just west of the site it stands a large historical structure that it is approximately 45 feet in height. The site
characteristics that deemed the site suitable for TOD are its close proximity to the rail station and retail corridor, the fact that the parcels are non-contributing features in the HPHPOZ, and the lack of existing pedestrian uses that allow for an interaction among pedestrians and the site features. Therefore, the study finds this site suitable for TOD.

Figure 19. Potential TOD Site C: Parking Area
CHAPTER 8. HIGHLAND PARK TOD ALTERNATIVES

The study analyzed TOD alternatives, employing three development scenarios to identify the development standards that would best suit the historic physical characteristics of the community, would be politically and financially feasible, as well as effectively use land to its highest potential. TOD Alternatives A, B, and C are not ranked according to preference but according to density and building height, with Alternative A presenting a scenario of low density and low building height and Alternative C presenting a scenario of high density and high building height. The key evaluation criteria the alternatives present are:

- Lot size
- Units per acre
- Total stories in height above ground
- Total retail square footage
- Number of replacement parking stalls
- Total parking spaces needed for the TOD project
- Remaining land with a two level parking structure. The study identified that allocating parking at grade would not allow an appropriate amount of land remaining to build an visually appealing project and that allocating parking below grade was financially unfeasible due to cost per parking stall for below grade parking stalls; hence, the study analyzed the alternatives according to remaining land after construction of a parking two level structure for all of the parking stalls needed.

The study analyzed other criteria such as:

- Residential parking requirements, which where set at 1.7 parking stalls per unit for all TOD alternatives, such specifications are allowed under the Los Angeles parking
requirements and Avenue 57 TOD specific plan, which allows for a 15 percent parking requirement reduction for development projects that are within 1,500 feet a rail station.

- Retail parking requirement where set at 4 parking stalls for every 1,000 square feet of retail space for all TOD alternatives.

- To better calculate the total square footage of development, the following values where inputted into all three alternatives of TOD in Highland Park:
  - Residential unit size at 850 square feet
  - Retail square footage at 8 percent of total structure square footage
  - Project landscape requirements at 12 percent of total site square footage
  - Building footprint is the product of total residential and retail square footage divided by the number of stories in the project

Another key factor in determining the feasibility of the alternatives was the amount of open space left for design enhancement features; thus, the study determined that allowing an additional 20 percent from the total site square footage is critical to produce a TOD project that will allow the many design features necessary to preserve the historic physical character of Highland Park. Any development alternative that does not display a surplus of 20 percent from the total site square footage was deemed unfeasible due to physical design constraints.

Even though the tables presented in this report do not display all the tabulations that were taken into consideration, it is important to note that all the evaluation criteria and calculations previously listed were taken into account. The products of the tabulations are displayed in this report and only the key elements that will determine whether a project is feasible or not are displayed. Furthermore, the complexity of the development proformas and tabulations do not
allow for proper reading in this report; hence, forcing the team to only display the key criteria findings for clearer understanding of TOD alternative feasibility.

The study identified three alternatives for Potential TOD Site A, which is the parking lot in front of the Gold Line rail station. A critical component of the site is the existing 100 parking stalls that the city and the businesses community would like to preserve. Hence, for the HP TOD Alternatives, those 100 parking stalls present a significant role in the feasibility of the TOD project. Within each alternative, there are three scenarios presented in which the first seeks to maintain the total number of parking stalls, the second seeks to maintain half (50 parking stalls), and the last seeks not to maintain any parking stalls. Furthermore, the study identified the “ideal” TOD project to allow for 20 percent of total site square footage to be set aside for design enhancement features (for HP TOD Alternative A, the set aside would be 9,000 square feet of total site square footage); hence, the number of parking stalls that are maintained plays a crucial role in the total remaining land for the TOD project. Nonetheless, all three TOD alternatives are presented with all three development scenarios seeking to identify the best TOD alternative as well as the best alternative scenario that would be best suited for Potential TOD site A. The objective of the study is to identify development standards that would serve as primary established criteria of development characteristics for the station area.

8.1 HP TOD Alternative: A

Alternative A displays a scenario in which the Avenue 57 TOD Specific Plan development specifications are presented. However, after further analysis the study determines the Specific Plan is somewhat lacking in prescriptive development standards for the station area. The Specific Plan indicates that any new development project must be lesser than 45 feet in height, which is the equivalent to three stories and the density of the project is limited to RD1.5
requirements, which only allows for 29 units per acre; however, the study limited the density of the development to 25 units per acre, which will allow for a project that the community would accept. The lot size for alternative A is 45,000 square feet, with a density of 25 units per acre, three stories in height, with 1,756 square feet of retail space (see Table 1). The physical feasibility of this project configuration is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Specific Plan</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Specific Plan</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Specific Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units per Acre</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Stories</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calculations</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Square Footage</td>
<td>1,756</td>
<td>1,756</td>
<td>1,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Replacement Parking Stalls</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Parking Stalls Needed for TOD Project</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Remaining Land w/pkg in a 2 Level Structure | 3,562 | 12,937 | 22,312 |

Table 1. HP TOD Alternative A: Tabulations

- If the existing 100 parking stalls are to be replaced, then the project is not feasible because the 20 percent set aside would not be reached (20 percent of total site square footage must be placed as set aside land for design enhancements).

- If only 50 parking stalls are to be replaced, then the project is feasible as determined by the amount of land remaining.

- If there are no parking stalls to be replaced, then the project would be deemed feasible with an impressive 40 percent of total site square footage as set aside.

Alternative A is feasible for development if it is developed under the scenarios of replacing only 50 percent of the parking stalls or none. The study identifies Alternative A to be acceptable by community residents and organizations that seek to preserve the historic physical character of
the community. Nonetheless, Alternative A restricts the levels of height and density that a TOD project must achieve.

**8.2 HP TOD Alternative: B**

Alternative B displays a scenario in which the height and density of the potential TOD project have been augmented from Alternative A. Alternative B analyzes TOD Site A, which has a total lot size of 45,000 square feet. Alternative B presents the characteristics of a median density TOD project with 35 units per acre and a total of four stories in height (see Table 2). The same three parking scenarios are presented in Alternative B; hence, determining the feasibility of the TOD project. The findings are as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units per Acre</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Stories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Calculations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Square Footage</td>
<td>2,459</td>
<td>2,459</td>
<td>2,459</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Replacement Parking Stalls</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Parking Stalls Needed for TOD Project</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Land w/pkg in a 2 Level</td>
<td>1,222</td>
<td>10,597</td>
<td>19,972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. HP TOD Alternative B: Tabulations

- If all 100 parking stalls are to be replaced, then the TOD project would not be feasible.
- If only 50 or no parking stalls are replaced, then the TOD project would be feasible.

Alternative B, identifies feasibility with the same measure as Alternative A. The significant differences of Alternative B from A are the height and density of the project; however, Alternative B presents an additional 10 housing units as well as an additional 703 square feet of retail space. Alternative B does not take into consideration the specific plan because it is presenting a scenario that could be possible to develop if the specific plan was not in effect.
Since there is close to 20 and 40 percent of remaining land for design enhancement features with the scenarios that replace only 50 and no parking stalls respectively, then with adequate design features and the set aside land for such features, the TOD project can enhance the historic physical character of the community.

8.3 HP TOD Alternative: C

Alternative C displays a scenario in which the height and density of the TOD project are significantly greater than Alternative A (status quo regulations for TOD projects). Alternative C displays the characteristics of a medium density TOD project for TOD Site A with 45 units per acre and a total of five stories in height (see Table 3). The project seeks financial feasibility by increasing the number of units per acre. According to Councilmember Reyes, “Highland Park is not a prime real estate development area; hence, if density and height incentives are provided, the project has the potential to be privately developed with guidance from the City and Council District 1 Office” (Reyes 2004). Alternative C does not take into consideration the regulations provided by the Specific Plan in terms of height and density limitations. The study finds that:

- If any parking stalls are to be replaced, then the TOD project would not be feasible as previously discussed by the land set aside criteria.
- If no parking stalls are to be replaced, then the project would be feasible.

The greatest concern with Alternative C is that community residents are opposed to the heights and densities that Alternative C presents. These concerns were voiced in numerous occasions from Highland Park residents and community organizations. Therefore, the TOD project would face political challenges if Alternative C is selected. The other concern with Alternative C is that it does not allow for any replacement of parking stalls, which the Figueroa Street business community and the councilmember have stated that “it is essential that a certain
number of parking stalls are maintain at the site for public use” (Iwatsu and Reyes 2004). Consequently, to such political adversity that Alternative C presents, the alternative and all its scenarios are found to be not feasible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units per Acre</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Stories</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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**Calculations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
<th>Hsg/Retail Median Density</th>
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<td>7,903</td>
<td>7,903</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Replacement Parking Stalls</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Parking Stalls Needed for TOD Project</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Land w/pkg in a 2 Level Structure</td>
<td><em>(9,103)</em></td>
<td>272</td>
<td><em>(9,647)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. HP TOD Alternative C: Tabulations**
CHAPTER 9. RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The team conducted a five-month study of the potential of TOD in the Highland Park Station Area and concluded that such potential is substantial in the station area. Furthermore, the team conducted a land suitability analysis, and the analysis identified three sites that were deemed as potential TOD sites according to the characteristics listed in Chapter 7. In conclusion, the study developed and analyzed three TOD alternatives for TOD Site A, which holds the most promise for TOD as outline in Chapter 7. Hence, the team recommended an alternative and development steps to achieve a successful TOD project in Highland Park station area.

9.1 Recommended Alternative

The study finds that Alternative B exhibits the TOD characteristics that best suit the station area. As previously discussed it, Alternative C was found to be not feasible for TOD in Highland Park; hence, that alternative is not further analyzed. However, since Alternative A still holds favorable TOD characteristics and is acceptable among community residents and historic preservation organizations; thus, a comparison of Alternative A and B is essential. The study identifies the following as the criteria for selecting Alternative B over A:

- Alternative B allows for an additional 10 residential units as opposed to Alternative A.
- Alternative B allows for an additional 703 of retail space as oppose to Alternative A.
- Since the scenario that replaces only 50 percent of the existing site parking stalls would have been selected regardless of alternative; then the set aside 20 percent of open space that would be used for design enhancements features only differs by a negative 2,340 square feet from Alternative B as oppose to A. The study deems the difference to be not of great significance primarily because Alternative B still allocates over 23 percent of the total site square footage for design enhancements features.
The most significant negative aspect of Alternative B over Alternative A is the fact that Alternative B is a story greater in height, which residents and historic preservation organization might oppose; however, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks and the design of the TOD project will be mitigated with the set aside land.

Therefore, the study recommends Alternative B and the scenario that seeks to preserve only 50 percent of the existing parking stalls at the site as the most suitable TOD project for Highland Park. The set aside land is crucial in the development of the project because that land would allow for greater flexibility in design features that will seek to mitigate the height and density of the project, in terms of seeking to preserve the historical physical character of the Highland Park Station Area.

9.2 Highland Park Development Steps

To reach successful results in the development of a TOD project in Highland Park, the study recommends the following development steps:

- Establish a “GRAND” vision for Highland Park in which all the stakeholders are taken into consideration. To create a vision for Highland Park the following must be taken into consideration:
  - The preservation of the rich arts and crafts community in Highland Park. Such community is part of Highland Park’s history; therefore, it must be taken into consideration. Economic development and community revitalization could use the rich historic arts and crafts community of the area to build upon and establish community development for Highland Park.
  - Historical architectural structures must serve as catalyst for economic development and neighborhood revitalization. Some excellent examples of this
include: Old Town Pasadena, Gasslamp Quarter in Downtown San Diego, and other areas in which historical structures have and continue to play a vital role in the community economic development process.

- The vast majority of Highland Park Station Area residents are of Latino origin (80 percent). Such population and culture must be utilized to its greatest potential and must serve as an opportunity for economic development. There are many positive ethnic enclaves in the region, but few locations for new enclaves; hence, presenting an opportunity for Highland Park to incorporate all of the three characteristics mention in this section and create a Latino enclave in which the historical structures can serve as the background for the display of Latino Arts and Crafts as well as non-Latino arts and crafts (see Figure 20).

- Creating such enclave would further the community goal and objectives previously identified as well as creating Highland Park into a regional destination and a vital economically independent community.

- Another crucial development step is to adjust existing regulations to allow developments that are both politically and financially feasible. The specific plan must be adjusted to better serve its purpose because as it currently stands it lacks the prescriptiveness needed
while strictly regulating height and density standards. The specific plan would better serve its purpose with adjustments seeking to resolve the issues listed above.

- The last but vital component of the development steps is the creation of design standards that would seek to establish a criterion by which all development projects would be evaluated by. Presently there are no design standards for the Highland Park Station Area; therefore, the only regulation is found in the specific plan in form of height and density restrictions. By creating design standards for the station area, the specific plan would not have to limit height and density of project because the design standards would address such issues and would identify methods to mitigate such issues.

The study concludes that if those development steps are followed along with the recommended TOD alternative, Highland Park can play a crucial role the region in terms of economic development and community revitalization. The process requires rigorous mutual work and collaboration among the various stakeholders of the community. Nonetheless, as previously identified, there are communities that have reached such success within the region and are now vital communities within the region. Therefore, the Highland Park Station Area can achieve similar or greater success if the goal and objectives of the station area are reached.
References


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Possert, Nicole.  **Highland Park Heritage Trust President.**  Personal Interview.  22 May 2004.

Reyes, Ed P.  **City of Los Angeles Council District 1 Council Member.**  Personal Interview.  (15 April 2004).
